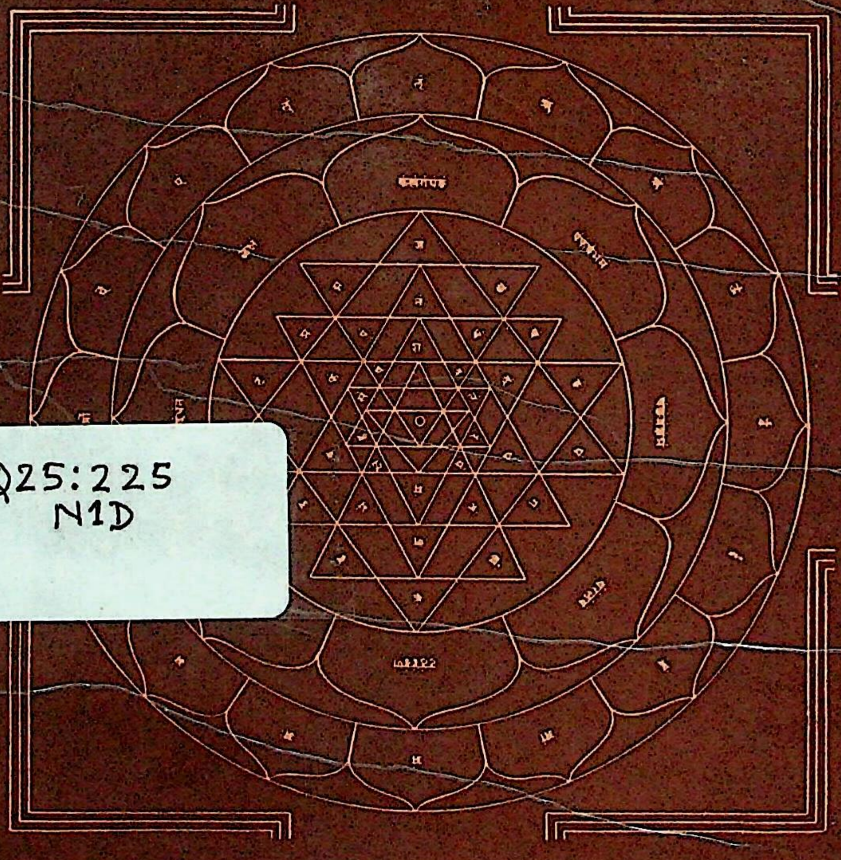
The Lalitā Cult



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THE LALITĀ CULT

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THE
LALITĀ CULT

V. R. RAMACHANDRA DIKSHITAR

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PREFACE

India is a land of many cults, and a critical and historical study of these cults, no doubt, affords abiding interest to students of ancient Indian culture. The present volume attempts to study the cult of Lalitā from a historical stand-point. Though this study is mainly based on the Lalitopākhyāna section of the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, an endeavour is made to review other phases of the Śakti cult and its place in Vedic literature, and particularly to examine its philosophic basis. If this book would help in removing some misconceptions and unproved theories which have obscured the true import and value of the Śakti cult, the author would feel amply rewarded.

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri for his valuable guidance, and to Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri and Sri S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri for helpful suggestions in the course of preparing this work, especially the last chapter.

University of Madras,
1st June, 1942.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar

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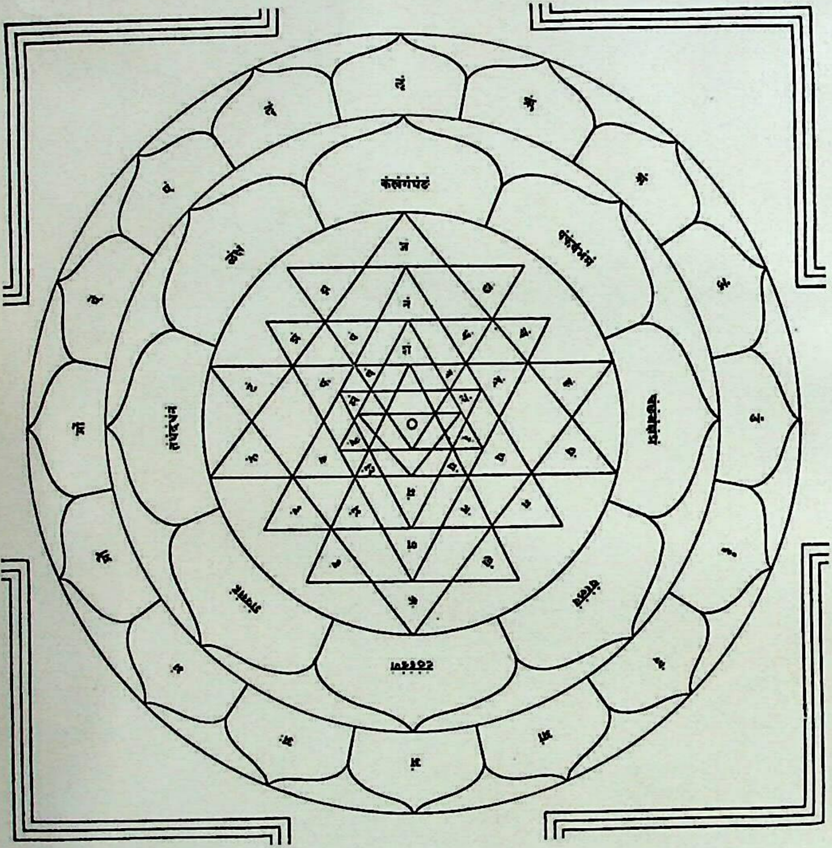
ŚRĪ CAKRA



बिन्दुत्रिकोणवसुकोणदशारयुग्ममन्वश्रनागदलसंयुतषोडशारम् ।
वृत्तत्रयं च धरणीसदनत्रयं च श्रीचक्रमेतदुदितं परदेवतायाः ॥

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CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE OF THE MANIFESTATION OF LALITĀ AND ITS FULFILMENT

SECTION 1

The Manifestation of Lalitā

Among the countless cults in ancient India, the cult of Lalitā has figured and still figures prominently among the Hindus. Lalitā is looked upon as a divine manifestation of Durgā, or Pārvatī, who is popularly known as the consort of Śiva. The cult of Lalitā is intimately associated with the Śakti cult. The expression Śakti represents female divinity in general, and stands for the energising power of any divinity in particular. Born in ages of hoary antiquity among the uncivilised and uncultured tribes of prehistoric India, the system of religious worship of Śakti began to grow slowly but surely with the march of time. With its increasing predominance the cult attracted many an adherent to its fold and thus was brought into existence a regular sect of worshippers of Śakti, who came to be designated Śāktas both in general and technical literature. The simple divinity of one universal goddess representing Earth, one has to presume, assumed different forms and consequently different names, and we have, therefore, no more one specific female divinity but a good number of them. We shall see presently, how these divinities are variously enumerated, and every one of them is assigned some function or other. Sometimes a group of female divinities is reckoned, and these are expected to function for the welfare of the world jointly and severally. If there is any phase of Indian religion which has been little studied but very much misunderstood it is Śaktism. In a recent study on the subject Ernest A. Payne makes the following remark: 'In its cult, it must be confessed at once, it has been connected with what has been generally and, in the main, rightly regarded as the most debased side of Hinduism.'[1] Evidently Payne has in his mind the crude popular practices and beliefs which are strictly local and which are undoubtedly not universally accepted in all India. But students of Indian religion should approach this subject from an entirely different angle of vision, and an endeavour to study this universal cult is bound to lead to an utterly different conclusion. In other words, there is a philosophical approach as well as a spiritual approach to this insufficiently recognised cult. To understand and realise this point of view, we have to turn to the pages of the earlier Purāṇas and other general literature which deal with these phases of Śaktism in great detail.

The Goddess is generally designated Devī and we have a great range of literature dealing with her immanence. To mention a few there is the *Devī Bhāgavatam*,[2] which, according to one set of scholars, takes a front rank among the Purāṇas. Again the *Devī Māhātmyam* forms an integral part of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.[3] Several chapters in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* and *Skanda Mahāpurāṇa* have interesting sidelights on her greatness and glory. Devī may be rendered, as Goddess; She is also Ambā, Mother Goddess, or Bṛhad-ambā, the Great Mother. Among the multifarious forms of Devī-worship, two major forms of worship which have gained currency from earliest times and still persist in modern India are Devī as Kālī, and Devī as Lalitā. Generally people in the lower order of culture are devoted to the worship of Devī as Kālī (*alias* Kālāyanī), a manifestation that inspires awe and dread and that breeds religious fanaticism on the part of its worshippers.[4]

---

[1] The Saktas—1933 Intro. p. 3: *Religious Life of India Series*.

[2] There is an English translation of *Devī Bhāgavata* published by Panini Office, Allahabad.

[3] Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa by F. E. Pargiter, published by Asiatic Society of Bengal.

[4] Some detail of Kāli worship by the Eiynar or primitive hunters of

Devī as Lalitā is worshipped by the classes of Hindu society in the higher plane of culture. While the Kālī worship has come to be looked upon as *avaidic*, the Lalitā form has won recognition as *vaidic*, and the orthodox Hindu worships Devī as Lalitā. And with this form we are particularly concerned here in this study.

The term Lalitā means lovely, elegant or charming. The representation of Her form and demeanour presents quite a contrast to that of Kālī. She has pleasing aspects and evokes not awe or dread but lofty spiritualism and philosophic calm. The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* devotes practically the whole of Book IV to the story (upākhyāna) of Lalitā. This book consists of forty-four chapters of which the last forty chapters beginning with the chapter V form the Lalitopākhyāna. Here we have a description of the origin of the Goddess, of the construction of Śrīpuram on which was modelled the Śrīcakra,[5] of the preparations for war with Bhaṇḍāsura, of the actual operations, and of the final triumph of Lalitā.

We shall take up these points one by one for examination. That the cult of Lalitā was different from the debased side of Hindu religion is evident from the well known tradition that the great Śankarācārya wrote a commentary on the *Lalitā-triśati*[6]; and thus attached a special significance to the worship of Lalitā by addressing Her with the three hundred names of the Triśati. It

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South India is given in the Tamil classic 'Śilappadikāram'. The Tamil name is Aiyai or Koṟṟavai. She was invoked to give them victory in their adventurous raids. A whole canto (XII) is full of interesting details as to the actual method of worship by the Eiynar. It is evident that the time of sacrifice (human sacrifice is also involved), and worship by these neolithic descendants was the dead of night, when the whole world went to sleep. (See Dikshitar, *Śilappadikāram*, pp. 180-189).

[5] Śrīcakra represents Śrīpura.

[6] Bhāskararāya's commentary on the Sahasranāma, is what is published and best known.

became a recognised mode of worship by the orthodox for the advancement of their moral and material welfare. Even to-day special prayers are offered to Lalitā during the Dassera festivities which fall generally in October. The idea underlying this cult is that the Devī pervades everything by her nature as energy (śakti), and by sending prayers to her, the devotee becomes blessed with power (śakti) which is three-fold—Icchāśakti, jñānaśakti and krīyā śakti. In fact one of the names in the Lalitā sahasranāma runs thus: *Icchāśakti–jñānaśakti–kriyāśakti–svarūpiṇī.*[7]

The legendary origin of the Devī as Lalitā is thus told in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.* There was once in very ancient times a powerful Asura by name Tāraka. By the virtue of his unequalled prowess and strength, he was lording over the whole universe and giving trouble even to gods. An assemblage of gods was held presided over by Viṣṇu, and it was resolved to depute Manmatha, the God of Love, to Śiva and His Consort Gaurī. The idea was that Tāraka was not afraid of any man or god except Kumāra who was to be born of Śiva and Gaurī. The birth of this Kumāra had been indefinitely postponed as Śiva was engaged in the practice of Yoga, and Gaurī was doing him service by waiting on Him, both oblivious of the feelings of sex-love. In the interests of the welfare of the world at large, the immediate birth of Kumāra was essential, none but the God of Love could effect it. It thus happened that Manmatha had to secretly meet Śiva and Gaurī engaged in austerity and excite their sexual instincts. Manmatha agreed to carry out the task entrusted to him though he had his own fears of the wrath of Śiva. He reached the Himalayan heights where Śiva was performing his penance and sent out his flower-shafts on the three-eyed Lord. Śiva's penance was disturbed. He got into a mood of uncontrollable anger and burnt the God of Love by opening His third eye.[8]

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[7] In his translation of the Lalitā Sahasranāma, R. Anantakrishna Sastri explains this name. The three śaktis refer to three qualities. According to the Sānketa Paddhati, desire (icchā) is her head, wisdom (jñāna) is her trunk and action (kriyā) is her feet. Thus her body consists of three energies. Of these, the thing that precedes becomes the cause of that that succeeds. It is the energy of desire when Brahman proceeds to create. When she reminds Brahman 'let this be thus,' it is the energy of knowledge. When Brahman acts with this knowledge, she becomes the energy of actions.

(II ed. 1925: pp. 252-3). The Kriyā is said to be fivefold: according to the Sūta Samhitā IV. 14, 28-29.

स्पन्दश्चैव परिस्पन्दः प्रक्रमः परिशीलनः ।
प्रचार इति विद्वद्भिः कथिताः पञ्च च क्रियाः ॥

In the Sītopaniṣad about Sītā it is said

सा देवी त्रिविधा भवति शक्त्यात्मना इच्छाशक्तिः क्रियाशक्तिः साक्षाच्छक्तिरिति

The commentator explains sākṣāt śakti as jñāna śākti. See also 34-37 of the same Upaniṣad.

Seeing that the God of Love had been reduced to ashes, one Gaṇeśvara by name Citrakarman who was a skilled artist, painted out of the ashes the picture of a human being. When Śiva's glance fell upon this wonderful picture, it got filled with life and effulgence. Citrakarman embraced this person of his make and asked him to pray to Śiva by repeating and meditating the *Śata rudrīya.*[9] Pleased with him, Śiva blessed him with unequalled overlordship in the world for 6000 years. Hearing this Brahmā the Creator, gave expression to his distress saying 'Bhaṇḍ', 'Bhaṇḍ'. Henceforward that person came to be known as Bhaṇḍa. But having been born out of the ire of Rudra, he assumed the *raudra* nature of Śiva and consequently behaved like a dānava (demon) in his acts and deeds. Maya the architect of the Asuras built a city of Śoṇitapura for his residence and Śukra, his Purohita (priest), had him anointed as the overlord of the whole world. The Asura's predominance was firmly established. The gods felt his iron hand heavy over them. Viṣṇu sent Māyāmohinī to create an illusion in the mind of Bhaṇḍa. It had some effect; but it was soon discovered by his Purohita who cautioned him against the danger he was in.

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[8] Br. Purāṇa, Bk. IV. Ch. 11.

[9] Vājasaneyi Śrī Śukla Yajurveda Samhitā. Ch. 16 (Venkateswara Press, Bombay).

In the meantime Nārada waited upon Indra, the king of Gods, and asked him to perform penance in honour of Parāśakti who alone would be able to overcome Bhaṇḍa. Indra heartily responded to the wish of the sage, and in the course of his austerities, resolved to perform a sacrifice to the Devī. A great fire was lighted and the Devī was propitiated with all kinds of flesh.[10] Out of the fire came a lovely figure, the Mahādevī embodying the elements of Trimūrti—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[11] The gods praised Her in eloquent terms as the universal mother and universal father, when the Goddess offered to vanquish their enemy Bhaṇḍa.[11a]

Having heard of the wonderful creation of Lalitā all gods including Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā came to the scene and paid their respects. Brahmā gave out as his opinion that her overlordship would be fruitful if she were yoked in wedlock. So Śiva as the manifestation of Kāmeśvara was thought of, and Viṣṇu[11b] as the brother of Devī gave her in marriage to Kāmeśvara. Henceforward Lalitā came to be known as Kāmeśvarī. The marriage, which was celebrated in pomp and splendour, came to an end when the gods departed to their respective places of residence. The sage Nārada finally took leave and seized that opportunity to remind once more the Devī of the chief purpose of her incarnation, namely, the vanquishing of the Asura Bhaṇḍa[11c]

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[10] Br. Purāṇa IV. Ch. 12.

[11] तन्मध्यतः समुदभूच्चक्राकारमनुत्तमम् ।
तन्मध्ये तु महादेवीमुदयार्कसमप्रभाम् ॥
जगदुज्जीवनकरीं ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मिकाम् ।
सौन्दर्यसारसीमां तामानन्दरससागराम् ॥
जपाकुसुमसङ्काशां दाडिमीकुसुमांबराम् ।
सर्वाभरणसंयुक्तां शृङ्गारैकरसालयाम् ॥
कृपातरङ्गितापाङ्गनयनालोककौमुदीम् ।
पाशांकुशेक्षुकोदण्डपञ्चबाणलसत्कराम् ॥
तां विलोक्य महादेवीं देवाः सर्वे सवासवाः ।
प्रणेमुर्मुदितात्मानो भूयोभूयाऽखिलात्मकाम् ॥
Ibid., 12. 70-74.

[11a] Br. Purāna IV. Ch. 13. The first thirty stanzas are in praise of the Mahādevī.

Section 2

The purpose of the manifestation as Lalitā

Mention has already been made of a number of female divinities who have manifested themselves from time to time and with a set purpose. We have, for example, Durgā, as Mahiṣāsuramardanī or the destroyer of the Asura Mahiṣa ; Cāmuṇḍī[12] as the destroyer of Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. In the same way the manifestation of Lalitā is associated with the annihilation of Bhaṇḍa and his party. The chief purpose of this manifestation was then to get rid of the Asura chief Bhaṇḍa who had been giving immense trouble in different ways to gods and men. This was fulfilled by a prolonged and terrible war full of horrid and harrowing details. This we shall proceed to examine.

The World Mother (Jagatām Mātā), Lalitā, had promised the gods to vanquish Bhaṇḍāsura. So the first thing for her to do was to prepare for a big fight, for Bhaṇḍa was no ordinary human being. He was a great warrior and soldier. So, elaborate preparations and precautions were absolutely essential. As a preliminary to preparations of war, the different kinds of musical instruments were sounded. The high class elephant corps was got ready as also a cavalry force constituted of horses from various parts of the world.[13] Lalitā assumed the role of Śrīdaṇḍanāthā or simply Daṇḍanāthā or Daṇḍanāyikā. She mounted her riding animal, the lion. She was followed by Mantranāthā or Mantranāyikā, the war-minister accompanied by hundreds of Śaktis riding on different mounts like the peacock, swan and koel. Her chief attendants were two, Yantriṇī and Tantriṇī. With these paraphernalia She mounted up the mighty chariot Geyacakraratha.[14]

[11b] *Padmanābhasahodarī* in the Sahasranāma.

[11c] Br. Purāna, IV. Ch. 15; 46-51.

[12] The tutelary deity of Mysore Mahārājas. See for a full description of the doings of this deity in the *Devī Mahātmya* of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.

Cakrarājarathendra was the great chariot in which Lalitā rode sometimes.[15] This had nine joints on which were stationed Śakti warriors fully armed for war. On the ninth joint or *parva* were the Aṣṭa Śaktis as well as Prakaṭa Śaktis.[16] On the eighth *parva* were stationed what are known as Gupta Śaktis armed with bows and arrows, shields and swords (*Ibid.* 16–23). In the seventh joint were other Śaktis like Anangalekhā and Anangavegā. What are termed as Ājñāśaktis were stationed on the sixth *parva,* all possessing fire-arms of various kinds.[17] In the fifth joint were Kulottīrṇa-śaktis. Their weapons were ploughshare, noose, mace, bells. In the next *parva* were ten goddesses commencing with Nīgarbhayoginī. Their arms were thunderbolt, tomara, śakti and cakra.[18] Goddesses known as Vāgadhīśvarās took their stand in the succeeding *parva* of the Cakraratha. These were eight in number. In the next *parva* were three who answered to our secret service (atiguptarahasyaka). Their names were Kāmeśī, Vajreśī and Bhagamālinī. These were special goddesses who were fully taken into confidence by Śrīdevī. In fact these three constituted the war cabinet of Lalitā (antaranga).[19] In addition to these were in the middle parva of the chariot fifteen Akṣara devatas. (Pañcadaśākṣaras).[20]

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[13] *Aśvārūḍhādhiṣṭhitāśva Koṭikoṭībhirāvṛtā* in the Sahasranāma.

[14] Br. Purāṇa IV. Chh. 16–17:

गेयचक्ररथारूढ मन्त्रिणी परिसेविता

is one of the nāmas in the Sahasranāma.

[15] So she is known as *Cakrarājarathārūḍhasarva-yuddha pariṣkṛtā.*

[16] Br. Purāṇa IV Ch. 19, 1-15.

[17] *Ibid.*, 24-34.

The Geyacakraratha of Mantrināthā had seven *parvas* or joints, which were equally well furnished. The first *parva* was the place of the Mantriṇī[21] herself. In the second were Rati, Prīti and Manojā. Drāviṇī, Śoṣiṇī and three more occupied the third *parva*. Next to this *parva*, i.e., in the fourth were Kāmarāja, Kandarpa, Manmatha, Makaradhvaja and Manobhava, commonly styled Pañcakāmas, their function being to create delusion in the minds of the enemy. Sixteen goddesses beginning with Vāmā were stationed in the fifth *parva*. In the succeeding *parva* were Bhairavas of terrific aspects. Mātangī, Siddhalakṣmī and others occupied the seventh *parva*, as also the lords of ten directions, holding śakti, śūla and other weapons of war. The two chief doorkeepers were named Rākṣi and Vijñāpana.[22]

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[18] *Ibid.*, 35-45.

[19] *Ibid.*, 46-53.

[20] *Ibid.*, 54-59. The names of the fifteen Devīs are given as follows:

कामेशी भगमाला च नित्यक्लिन्ना तथैव च ॥
भेरुंडा वह्निवासिन्यो महावज्रेश्वरी तथा ।
दूती च त्वरिता देवी नवमीकुलसुन्दरी ॥
नित्यानीलपताका च विजया सर्वमङ्गला ।
ज्वालामालिनिकाचित्रे दश पञ्च च कीर्तिताः ॥
Ibid., 57-59.

[21] श्रीदेव्याः शक्तिसाम्राज्ये सर्वकर्माणि मन्त्रिणी ॥
अकर्तुमन्यथा कर्तुं कर्तुं चैव प्रगल्भते ।
Ibid., 90-91.

There was again the Kiricakraratha,[23] which had seven *parvas* or joints. In the first *parva* called Baindava there was Daṇḍanāyikā who was full of fire and prowess. She was also known as Potriṇī by name. In the second *parva* were three goddesses—Jṛmbhiṇī, Mohinī and Stambhinī fully armed and ready to vanquish the Asuras. In the third *parva* were Andhinī and four other goddesses. In the next *parva* were six goddesses who looked as if they could swallow the whole host of the Asura army. Yakṣiṇī, Śankhinī and five more occupied the last *parva* and seemed to eat up the entire universe. All these deities were there loyal to Daṇḍanāthā and waiting to do her bidding instantaneously. The two weapons of war which Daṇḍanāthā held were *hala* (ploughshare) and *musala* (pestle). There was in her front lying in all its ferociousness a fierce lion. In the sixth *parva* of the Kiricakraratha were the Aṣṭadevis, representing the eight directions, serving the Daṇḍanāthā day and night. Beyond this *parva* were Indra, Agni, Siddhas, Sādhyas, Viśvedevas and other gods imbued with the ideal of service to Daṇḍanāthā. There were also seen Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, and important leaders of the Nāga tribe. Beyond these were seen the ten Bhairavas, each followed by crores of their followers.[24]

Thus were seen the three chariots of war[25] standing side by side, all fully equipped with warriors and their needs. There were huge war cries which arose from the army of Lalitā. While six charioteers including the Devī were seen in the Cakrarājaratha, the Geyacakraratha and Kiricakraratha had one charioteer for each, and these were Hasantikā and Stambhinī.[26] Over each of these chariots were seen umbrellas. Cries of victory, victory to Lalitā rent the air from the camp of the Devas. Praised and blessed by the seven sages, Lalitā set out on her victorious expedition[27] against the inveterate enemy Bhaṇḍa.

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[22] *Ibid.*, 61-94.

[23] One of the Sahasranāmas of the Devī is

किरिचक्ररथारूढ दण्डनाथा पुरस्कृता ।

[24] Ch. 20. 1-85.

[25] Geyacakraratha, Cakrarājaratha, and Kiricakraratha.

SECTION 3

Bhaṇḍa's Council

The war cry raised from the camp of Lalitā was heard far in Bhaṇḍa's city which went by the name of Śūnyaka and which was situated on the sea coast very near the Mahendra hill.[28] The citizens of this city noticed a number of bad omens occurring there suddenly, and informed Bhaṇḍa of all of them. He became perturbed at heart. He went to the Council chamber (mantra sthāna) attended by his younger brothers Viśukra and Viṣanga, who had won many a battle. While Bhaṇḍa, the chief of the Asuras, took his allotted seat in the hall, others including his brothers took their seats on the floor. Thither came the Sāmanta chieftains to pay respects to their overlord. At that time stood forth Viśukra and addressed the Council: "The wicked and sinful Devas have put up a woman as their leader, and she with a number of the members of her sex is marching towards our city. Though a woman, she cannot be neglected. Therefore it is better that an army is sent forthwith to vanquish her."[29]

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[26] *Ibid.*, 86-94.

[27] *Ibid.*, 95-106. One of her nāmas is *Bhaṇḍāsuravadhodyuktạ śaktisenāsamanvitā*.

[28] महेन्द्रपर्वतोपान्ते महार्णवतटे पुरम् ॥
तत्तु शून्यकनाम्नैव विख्यातं भुवनत्रये ।
Ibid., 21. 2-3.

[29] यद्यपि स्त्री तथाप्येषा नावमन्या कदाचन ।
अल्पोऽपि रिपुरात्मज्ञैर्नावमान्यो जिगीषुभिः ॥
Ibid., 30-47.

The wise Viṣanga then addressed his elder brother sitting in the Council: 'My Lord, there is nothing which you do not know. Everything should be done on proper enquiry. Anything undertaken without sufficient enquiry would prove unfruitful. So spies should be sent out to know the strength and weakness of the enemy and the conquering king should keep his plans in secret, and put into use the six upāyas whenever occasion demands. So what is required is proper deliberation. It is wrong to despise an enemy notwithstanding the fact that she is a woman. Have you not heard that a woman Caṇḍikā by name overcame the powerful Niśumbha and Śumbha? What really gives victory is śakti or prowess.'[30]

To this Bhaṇḍa replied, 'It would be cowardly on our part to be afraid of a woman, and that a slender limbed lady. If she has the boldness to lead an expedition, it is due to sheer ignorance on her part of our power and strength. Even if all the Deva hosts come to her aid, have we not, in our army, warriors equal to Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa? Who on earth can assail our well-organised and well-disciplined army?' Saying thus he called upon his senāni (Commander-in-Chief) Kuṭilākṣa to get ready for the defence of the city by stationing the army at all its entrances and to engage in *abhicāra mantras* leading to their success.[31]

In obedience to the orders of the king of the Daityas, Kuṭilākṣa, the Commander-in-Chief posted able warriors at the different entrances to the capital to prevent the enemy from entering. After despatching Durmada to offer battle to the advancing Lalitā hosts the Commander-in-Chief reported it to Bhaṇḍa.[32]

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30. *Ibid.*, Ch. 21. 48-61 Viṣanga on śakti:

शक्तिरेव हि सर्वत्र कारणं विजयश्रियः।
शक्तेराधारतां प्राप्तैः स्त्रीपुंलिंगैर्न नोभयम् ॥
शक्तिस्तु सर्वतो भाति संसारस्य स्वभावतः ॥

31. *Ibid.*, 62-100.

32. *Ibid.*, Ch. 22. 19-29.

SECTION 4

The War

Seeing that the Asura hosts were marching with a view to attack their army, Sampatsarasvatī followed by a number of Sampatkarī–Śaktis offered to meet them. Hence the Devī is addressed in the Sahasranāma as *Sampatkarī-samarūḍha-sindhura-vrajasevitā*. In the battle that ensued there was much slaughter resulting in a river of blood. When Durmada who had for his riding animal a camel of enormous strength found that many of his followers had been put to death, he wanted to face the leader on the other side, Sampatsarasvatī, who rode on a war elephant. Both fought a bitter battle. Her elephant made great havoc among the Daitya hosts. Worked to ire Durmada sprang at her and deprived her of a gem in her crown jewel. On this the Devī gave him a heavy blow on his chest which brought him down dead. The remainder of the Asura hosts took to their heels towards their city Śūnyaka.[33]

Bhaṇḍa grew wrathful and asked his Commander-in-Chief to send Kuraṇḍa, one of their best commanders, to wreak vengeance on her who had killed Durmada. Kuraṇḍa was versed in *citrayuddha* where māyā or illusion was freely used and in *kūṭayuddha* or crafty warfare. With a huge army Kuraṇḍa met Sampatkarī and spoke to her words befitting a Śūra. At that time the Śakti hosts got more elated. Aparājitā, a Devī on horse-back, offered to attack Kuraṇḍa. There was an exchange of arms of different kinds on both sides, resulting ultimately in the death of the Asura commander with all his hosts. The rest of them retreated post haste to inform Bhaṇḍa of the news.[34]

Bhaṇḍa felt sorry for the death of heroes like Kuraṇḍa and Durmada and addressed his Commander-in-Chief to send five com–

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[33] *Ibid.*, 31-66.

[34] *Ibid.*, 67-107.

manders with a hundred akṣauhiṇī of soldiers. The vast army started in all enthusiasm to defeat the śakti host. There was a huge tumult and confused shouts with standards containing ensigns of fish and tiger flying aloft. The five commanders of whom the chief was Karanka engaged themselves first in Sarpiṇī māyā. This was the commencement of severe hostilities. The Sarpiṇī māyā resulted in the production of hundreds and thousands of reptiles of all kinds with and without hoods which created fear and confusion in the rank and file of the Śakti army. When the Devī host was thus troubled by the poisonous reptiles, the Śaktis thought of Nakulī riding the Garuḍa. She approached Sarpiṇī, the mother of all reptiles, and produced numbers of Nakulas who destroyed all the serpents, and Nakuleśvarī herself by the application of Garuḍāstra killed Sarpiṇī.[35] On this the five commanders grew wild with rage and sent fiery arrows on the Nakulas. Nakulī retorted by sending an astra called *akṣīṇa nakulam,* which produced unceasing Nakulas all of whom brought trouble to the Asura soldiers. Nakulī easily cut off the heads of the five commanders and was highly honoured by Syāmalāmbikā.[36]

Bhaṇḍa's anger knew no bounds. He once again called up his Commander-in-Chief and ordered him to send Balāhaka brothers, who were seven in number, to meet the advancing Śakti army. So it was done. Balāhaka brothers were noted for their powers of endurance and strength. Besides they had won a boon from the Sun god that if they wished so in battles, the whole enemy camp would be enveloped by thick darkness. So the brothers started with great enthusiasm followed by three hundred akṣauhiṇīs. The seven brothers were Balāhaka, Sūcīmukha, Phālamukha, Vikarṇa, Vikaṭānana, Karalāyu, and Karaṭaka. Their riding animals in the field of war were eagle, crow, kanka, bheruṇḍapatana, hen, preta and vetāla. It is said that these seven brothers enveloped the mass of the Śakti hosts in utter darkness when a certain Śakti Tiraskaraṇikā offered to vanquish these Daityas. She let fly a missile Andha which caused blindness to all the seven brothers. Having done this, Tiraskaraṇikā urged by other Śaktis slew all of them one by one to the wonderment of the Śakti soldiers. The Śakti warriors praised her prowess and applauded her heroic deed at every stage.[37]

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[35] Ch. 23. 1-67.

[36] *Ibid.*, 68-95.

The news of the death of Balāhaka brothers completely paralysed Bhaṇḍa. He now began to realise that the enemy was not to be trifled with. He once more resorted to the Council Chamber and summoned his cabinet to concert measures of defence. The Yuvarāja was present. Only a few ministers in whom he had full confidence were there, including of course the Commander-in-Chief, Kuṭila. Bhaṇḍa related how women warriors were able to overcome his heroic followers and how he had heard through his spies of Lalitā occupying the last place in the army, and how it was necessary under the circumstances to institute Pārṣṇigrāha (attack in the rear) for which Viṣanga was eminently fitted and which must be led in secrecy to the place where Lalitā the leader of the whole host was stationed. For in Bhaṇḍa's opinion, the fall of the chief leader would result in their victory. Then Bhaṇḍa addressed Viṣanga to that effect and got ready an army to aid him in his endeavour. To this Viṣanga assented.[38]

Unnoticed and with no war music or any outward show, the army of Viṣanga moved slowly to the place where stood the Cakrarājaratha guarded in every *parva* by strong armed Śaktis. Lalitā came to know soon of the arrival of the enemy in the rear. In the meantime Bhaṇḍa had sent Kuṭila, the Commander-in-Chief himself, to attack the vanguard, and he had arrived with a host of warriors in front of Lalitā's army which was practically hemmed in by the Daitya army. Lalitā found the treachery of Bhaṇḍa and saw her army being scattered and frightened by the Asura soldiers. She grew highly wrathful. Tithinityas and Kāmēśvari requested permission of the Devī to fight with the Asuras. When this was granted every one of the commanders who came to help Viṣanga was put to the sword. Viṣanga got afraid and retreated. The battle was fought overnight, and it was morning when Lalitā was informed of the victory of Nityadevis over the Asuras, and Lalitā looked at them with much grace.[39] Kuṭilākṣa also ran away in fear.[40]

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[37] Ch. 24.

[38] 25. 1-33.

First day of the battle :

The Minister for War and the Commander-in-Chief of Lalitā were much annoyed by the crafty warfare resorted to by the Asuras with no sense of proportion in regard to time or place. They, therefore, waited upon their leader to take prompt steps to avert such situations thereafter. They suggested that a big camp should be erected on the south of the Mahendra hill, as the capital of Bhaṇḍa was somewhere there. There were to be several entrances all well guarded and stationed with best soldiers. The whole camp should further be made unapproachable by a mass of blazing fire ever burning all round it. This was entrusted to Jvālāmālinikā. The centre of the camp was to be occupied by the chariot of Lalitā protected on its two wings by the Geyacakra and Kiricakra rathas. This was agreed upon, and the camp was got ready.[41]

Bhaṇḍa once again held consultation with his choice ministers and asked his own sons thirty in number, equal to him in every respect, to offer fight to the Lalitā army, and to take Lalitā alive as prisoner (jīvagrāham ca sā grāhyā). With great enthusiasm they led an expedition making a huge noise as they went.[42]

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[39] *Ibid.*, 44-108.

[40] 26.1.

[41] *Ibid.*, 2-41. So we have in the Sahasranâma

ज्वालामालिनिकाक्षितवह्निप्राकारमध्यगा

Second day of the battle :

When the news of the march of the sons of Bhaṇḍa reached the camp of Lalitā, Kumāri, the nine year old daughter of Lalitā, expressed her keen desire to be allowed to fight the Kumāras of the Asura chief. Finding her too young and newly initiated in the technique of warfare, Lalitā persuaded her to wait. But she would not. She was full of self-reliance and Lalitā ultimately yielded to her wish. Finding her getting up the Cakrarājaratha equipped for battle, Mantriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā were surprised and tried to dissuade her but in vain. Then both of these offered to help her by standing on either side and protecting the two flanks. Everybody was astonished at the ease with which Kumārikā was able to outwit the enemy and vanquish him. The battle dragged on to a second day and Kumārikā was still blooming with vigour. She did not show any sign of exhaustion. By the application of Nārāyaṇāstra the whole host of Asura warriors was burnt to ashes. This included the death of all the sons of Bhaṇḍa. Kumārikā was profusely felicitated by all the Śaktis, and Lalitā was glad at heart to learn of the unparalleled success that attended her daughter's maiden attempt.[43]

Bhaṇḍa heard the news and became heart-broken. He bewailed the loss of his dear and beloved sons and felt himself helpless in every respect. Viśukra, Viṣanga and Kuṭilākṣa brought him consolation and pointed out that it was the legitimate duty of his sons who were heroes (vīras). Each of them offered to go and bring success to his arms. As ordered Viśukra got ready a Mahâyantra and riding in a Māyāratha reached the camp and saw the huge ball of fire enveloping all sides. Standing outside he threw the mantra-energised yantra into the enemy's camp creating laziness and indifference in the minds of Śaktis guarding the camp.[44]

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[42] *Ibid.*, 42-71.

[43] *Ibid.*, 72-116. One of the names of the Devī in the Sahasranāma is

भण्डपुत्रवधोद्युक्तबालाविक्रमनन्दिता

It was the middle part of the night of the second day. Noticing this indifferent attitude on the part of the Śaktis appointed to protect the camp, Mantriṇī and Daṇḍanāthā were much depressed. They went and informed Lalitā of this, when the latter turned her face towards Kāmeśvara. He went by other names Gaṇanātha and Gajānana.[45] He took the hint and after paying respects went to the field of engagement and destroyed completely the Jayayantra of Viśukra the very same night. Mahāgaṇapati served by six Vighnanāyakas who were all lords of seven crores of Herambas entered the Asura hosts bringing discomfiture to them, by hitting, by biting, by kicking and by other means. To deaden the effect of these Gajānanas, Gajāsura, a Rākṣasa was created but single-handed Gaṇeśvara vanquished him, and Viśukra now felt his life in danger and began to flee. Pleased with the heroism of Mahāgaṇapati, Lalitā granted him a boon that in any worship, the worship of Gaṇapati should precede[46] the worship of all the other gods.

Third day of the battle :

The second day of the battle was over. Bhaṇḍa resolved to send both his brothers Viṣanga and Viśukra to meet the leader of the enemy face to face. Elaborate preparations were made. Daṇḍa nāthā came out armed with *hala* and *musala* and engaged herself with Viṣanga. The valorous Mantrini fought riding on horse with Viśukra. Other Śaktis fought with other leaders of the Asura hosts. Viśukra sent out the missile Tṛṣāstra making all the Devas feel ever thirsty. Lalitā remembered Madirāsindhu who showered all kinds of vine and liquor with which the Devas quenched their thirst and refreshed themselves.[47]

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[44] Ch. 27. 1-53.

[45] कामेश्वरमुखालोककल्पितश्रीगणेश्वरा
महागणेशनिर्भिन्नविघ्नयन्त्रप्रहर्षिता
are names of Lalitā appropriate to her action in the field of battle. Gaṇapati in the Śatarudrīya *litany* is a reference to Rudra himself (Vājasaneya Samhitā, 16.25). Gaṇapati as the son of Śiva is a later conception of Hinduism. He gets the name Vināyaka mentioned for the first time in the Atharvaśiropaniṣad.

[46] *Ibid.*, 55-104. This is one of the theories on the origin of the cult of Gaṇapati.

The brief lull was broken. The battle began with renewed freshness and enthusiasm. The war cry was raised aloft in both camps, and heroic words were exchanged. Once again Mantri fought with Viśukra and Daṇḍanāthā with Viṣanga. Both Viśukra and Viṣanga were slain.[48]

Fourth day of the battle :

The third day of battle was over. Bhaṇḍa grew wild with rage. He addressed his Commander-in-Chief to collect together all the male citizens of Śūnyaka and decided to make the final effort himself. It is said that except women there were none in the city. All the males volunteered to fight Lalitā and the mighty host of Bhaṇḍa went out to meet the leader of the Deva army. The Mother of the Universe who was waiting for the arch villain Bhaṇḍa to appear in the field, grew glad at heart and prepared herself to meet him straight.[49] It was the morning of the fourth day of battle. The day began with the slaughter of thousands of Asura warriors, resulting in a river of blood. A number of missiles were exchanged on both sides. The effect of each missile was averted by sending a corresponding missile which would arrest the power of the other. So she is invoked as *Bhaṇḍāsurendra nirmukta śastrapratyastravarṣinī.* For instance, Bhaṇḍa sent out Andhāstram and Lalitā Cakṣusmata Mahāstram. There was also a heavy toll on the Śakti side. There were cries of *hâ hâ* among them. On this Lalitā grew very much pained and out of her anger was born a certain Durgā by name Yaśasvinī fully armed, each weapon being given to her by one of the chief gods like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Yama, Viśvakarman and others. She rode on the lion and plunged into the thick of the battle.[50] Bhaṇḍa did not lose courage. He created Rākṣasas and Asuras commencing with Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu to Rāvaṇa and Kamsa. On this side the services of all the *avatars* of Viṣṇu commencing with Ādivarāha down to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Kalki who were created from the right thumb nail were requisitioned to terrify them and vanquish them ultimately. After their work was over, and permitted by Lalitā, all went back to their permanent abodes.[51] With the aid of the astra called Pāśupata the whole army of the Asuras were given over to the flames. This achievement of the Devī has become one of her names in the Sahasranāma : *Mahāpāśupatāstrāgni nirdagdhāsura sainikā.*[52]

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[47] Ch. 28. 2-79.

[48] *Ibid.*, 92-114. Among the Sahasrānamās addressed are the following:

मन्त्रिण्यबाविरचितविषङ्गवधतोषिता
विशुक्रप्राणहरणवाराहीवीर्यनन्दिता

[49] *Bhaṇḍa saīnyavadho dyuktaśaktivikramaharṣitā* is a name among her thousand names.

At this Bhaṇḍa resorted to Mahāmohāstram and Lalitā sent out Śāmbhavāstra. After a number of missiles, she threw on Bhaṇḍa, Mahākāmeśvarāstra which put an end to his life.

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50. Ch. 29. 1-86.

51. *Ibid.*, 87-136.
Karāngulinakhotpannanārāyaṇadaśākṛtih.

52. Br. Purāṇa IV, Ch. 29-140.

(*Kāmeśvarāstra nirdagdhasabhaṇḍāsurasainikā*). Then the city Śūnyaka was set fire to and all including women and children were burnt down.[53] Thus was the object of the *avatar of Lalitā* fulfilled and the gods heaved a deep sigh of relief. Lalitā felicitated every one of the Śaktis who were tired after their stern fight with the Asuras.[54]

All the gods, the chief of whom were Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra came to the spot and congratulated Lalitā on her unprecedented success.[55] On behalf of the gods Brahmā addressed her panegyrising her, and appealed to her pointing out to her the pitiable Rati[56] to restore her husband Manmatha to her, so that Śiva might be induced to embrace His consort and give birth to Kumāra who alone could vanquish the other great Asura Tāraka. Lalitā agreed and remembered the God of Love. There was a marriage of Rati and Manmatha. She blessed him with power to roam about the world creating *moha,* immediately to bring about the union of Śiva and Gaurī.[57] Smitten by the arrow of the God of Love, Śiva became mad after his consort and wrote a picture like her. And on the other side Gaurī felt keenly her separation from her lord and longed to meet him. Through the intervention of the seven sages the marriage was celebrated, and both Śiva and Gaurī roamed about hill and dale enjoying pleasures of various kinds.[58] After fulfilling her purpose, Lalitā went and settled at Śrīnagar.[59]

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[53] *Ibid.*, 141-144.

[54] शक्तिनामखिलं सैन्यं दैत्यायुधशतार्दितम्
मुहुराह्लादयामास लोचनैरमृताप्लुतैः ।
ललिता परमेशान्याः कटाक्षामृतधारया
जहुर्युद्धपरिश्रान्तिं शक्तयः प्रीतिमानसाः ॥

Ibid., 30. 5-6.

[55] *Brahmopendra mahendrādi devasamstutavaibhavā.*

[56] *Haranetrāgnisamdagdha kāmasaṅjīvanauṣadhih.*

[57] *Ibid.*, 7-65.

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[58] *Ibid.*, 66-105.

[59] देवकार्यं सुसंपाद्य जगाम श्रीपुरं पुनः ।
यत्र श्रीनगरे पुण्ये ललिता परमेश्वरी
वर्तते जगतामृद्ध्यै तत्र तां सेवितुं ययौ ॥

Ibid. 106-7.

CHAPTER II

THE CULT OF LALITĀ

SECTION 1

The Building of Śrinagar

The discomfiture of Bhaṇḍa evoked wonder and respect for Lalitā from all quarters including the divine. Lalitā was universally hailed as the Parāśakti, Mother of the Universe, and Mother of Gods. This gave rise to the cult of the Lalitā. The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* mentions a number of cults, which we have to presume were widely prevalent at the time of the composition of the Purāṇa. These cults are mentioned in the order of precedence: the Vedic mantras, Viṣṇu mantras, Daurgāmantras, Gāṇapata mantras, Sārasvata mantras, Śaiva mantras, Lakṣmī mantras, Arkamantras, Girijā mantras and Śyāma manu mantras and Lalitā mantras.[1] This multiplicity of cults shows beyond doubt the extension of the use of the Āgama śāstras in preference to Vedic literature. The Vedic system of worship and prayer had become decadent and a number of new cults, each of which claimed to be rooted in the Vedic mantras, sprang up like mushroom growths. Excepting a few, most of the cults mentioned above centre round the Śakti cult. Durgā,[2] Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī,[3] Girijā (Pārvatī), Vārahā, Syāmā and Lalitā are cults which come under the category of the Śakti cult. This means that one and the same

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[1] Ch. 38, 4-8.

[2] See Brahmavaivarta, II, ch. 57 and 66.

[3] On the origin and worship of Sarasvatī the reader is directed to the Devī Bhāgavatam Bk. IX, Chh. iv to vi; Brahmavaivarta II, ch. 4. If we look back to the days of the Ṛg Veda samhitā, Sarasvatī figures as a Goddess of War who went to wars to put down the enemies of the Devas

Mother Ambā or Ambikā was worshipped by groups of votaries each meditating on particular and special aspects of the manifestation of the Mother. All these cults are interrelated.

According to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, however, the cult of Lalitā was the most efficacious. The principal centres of Śakti worship referred to in this Purāṇa are Śrīnagar and Kāñcī. A passing mention is made of Tripurasundarī enshrined at Ayodhyā. But there is a detailed description of Śrinagar to which Lalitā is said to have retired after her battle with Bhaṇḍa.[4] The Puraṇa narrates how the work of building Śrinagar was entrusted to Viśvakarman and Maya the architect of the gods and Asuras respectively. Erected in the midst of Ṣoḍaśikṣetra, it was constituted of the nine mountains (Merupṛṣṭha, Niṣadha, Hemakūṭa, Himavān, Gandhamādana, Nīla, Meṣa, Śṛngāra, and Mahendra), and the seven seas (Lavaṇa, Ikṣu, Sura, Ghṛta, Dadhi, Kṣīra and Jala).[5] The ancient name of Śrinagar was Atastadīya. Other names were Kāmeśvarīpurī, Bhagamālāpurī and Nityaklinnāpurī.[6] Legend goes on to say that Meru consists of four lofty peaks, three of which are occupied by Brahmaloka, Viṣṇuloka and Śivaloka. On the remaining *śṛnga* stands the great Śrīpura or Śrīnagar,[7] occupying an area of 400 yojanas in length and breadth.

Details of seven prākāras, with śālas, gopuras, and doors at the four entrances, are all furnished. The prākāras are respectively made of iron, brass, copper, lead, bronze, pañcaloha, silver and gold each at a distance of seven yojanas. Each prākara was a fort in itself, and was protected by proper guards. The Mahākālas of

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(R. V. I. 3:2.3: 5.61). In another place she was the mother of waters and had seven sisters (*Ibid.*, 6.62).

[4] Ch. 30. 106-7.

[5] Br. Purāṇa, IV ch. 31. 1-20.

[6] *Ibid.*, 23-24.

[7] This may at first suggest a veiled reference to the founding of Śrinagar now in modern Kashmir State.

dark colour guard the iron fort together with their Śaktis. These worship Lalitā in the Kālacakra made up of Trikoṇa, Pañcakoṇa, sixteen-petalled lotus and the eight-petalled *padmam*. The six Ṛtus with their Śaktis protect the remaining six forts, taking their shelter from their particular cakras. (Ch. 32. 1-20). In these cakras there are thirty Śaktis from Madhuśuklā I to Madhuśuklā XV and from Madhukṛṣṇā I to Madhukṛṣṇā XV. Here are also a number of śālas, filled by the Gandharvas, Apsaras, Nāgas, Yakṣas and Rudras. (*Ibid.*, 43–62: also Ch. 33 whole). Mention is made of as many as twenty-five śālas, each of which was perhaps a miniature fortress in itself. These śālas were made of different materials. There are eight śālas of metals of iron, steel, copper, lead, brass, pañcaloha (an alloy of five metals), silver and gold. Groves of trees separated these śālas. For example the Kadambavanavāṭika was between gold and silver śālas and formed the residence of Mantriṇī.[8] Eleven śālas were of precious stones. These were puṣparāga (topaz), padmarāga (emerald), gomedaka (a gem described as of four different colours), vajra (diamond), vaiḍūrya (lapis lazuli), indranīla (sapphire), pearls, green stones, corals, a mixture of nine gems, and one of different gems. Among these, that of pearls must be specially noted. Here in a cakra with sixteen enclosures resides Mahārudra ever meditating on Lalitā, surrounded by a number of Rudras and Rudrāṇīs. These Rudras guard the fortress. Some are found sitting, some keeping awake, some sleeping, some standing and some running to and fro. The sixteen enclosures[8a] are :—

(1) Trikoṇa. Here are three Rudras—Hiraṇyabāhu, Senānī and Diśāmpati.

(2) Ṣaṭkoṇa. Here are Vṛkṣa, Harikeśa, Paśupati, Saspiñcara, Dviṣīmat and Patīnāmpati.

(3) Aṣṭakoṇa. Here are eight Rudras from Babruśa to Heti.

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[8] *Ibid.*, 29-85.

[8a] *Ibid.*, ch. 34. 1.51.

(4) Ten petalled lotus. Here are ten Rudras, the last of whom is Vṛkṣapati.

(5) Twelve petalled lotus. With twelve Rudras commencing with Mantri and ending with Satvapati.

(6) Thirteen petalled lotus. With thirteen Rudras beginning with Sahamānar to Niśeru.

(7) Sixteen petalled lotus, being the residence of sixteen Rudras from Pañcara.

(8) Eighteen petalled lotus. Among these eighteen Rudra gaṇas resident here, are Āsinar, Śayānar, Jāgratar, Tiṣṭhantar, Dhāvantar and others to which a reference was made above.

(9) Twenty petalled lotus consisting of twenty gaṇas of Rudras.

(10) Twenty-two petalled lotus. Here are Karmārar, Niṣādhar, Śvapatis and others.

(11) Twenty-four petalled lotus. Iṣumat, Harasvat, Vainanar and others guard this place.

(12) Twenty-six petalled lotus. Here live twenty-six gaṇas of Rudras ending with Tṛṣṇu.

(13) Thirty petalled lotus. Thirty gaṇas ending Vāstupar and Somar.

(14) Thirty petalled lotus again with thirty Rudras as residents.[8b]

(15) Thirty-two petalled lotus, ending with Devahṛdayar.

(16) Bhūpuram, with four entrances guarded by armed Vikṣīnakar, Vicinvatkar, Ānirhatar, and Āmivatkar respectively.

8b. The thirteenth and fourteenth enclosures are said to be thirty petalled lotus. See *Lalitopākhyānam* in Tamil by Somadevasarma, pp. 150-151 (Madras, 1940).

The remaining six śālas go by the common name of mahāpadmāṭavī prākāras. These are *manomaya* (imagination born), *buddhimaya* (knowledge born), *ahankāramaya* (mind born), the prākāras of the sun and the moon, and the Śṛngāraprākāra (literally blissful). These śālas were separated by divine vāpis like amṛta and ānanda. At a distance of seven yojanas from the Śṛngāraprākāra was the Cintāmaṇigṛha where sported the daughters of Mātanga,[9] doing service to Mantriṇī. This also goes by the name Mahāpadmāṭavī. In this were a hundred gopuras and twenty-five fortresses. To the east of the Mahāpadmāṭavī is placed the *arghya* vessel served by the *kalas* of Agni, Sūrya, Candra, Śiva, Hari and Brahmā drinking of the nectar in the vessel but noticing no diminution in it.

In the Mahāpadmāṭavī again shines the resplendant cakra, called cakrarāja. It is a chariot of nine tiers, its four wheels being the four Vedas, its four horses being the four puruṣārthas (dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa), and adorned by a number of flags and pennons, covered over by an umbrella of pearls. Here are also Geyacakra and Kiricakra. On the Agni direction there is an Agnikuṇḍa, ever burning. It is citagnikuṇḍa. The whole Cintāmaṇigṛha is lighted by bejewelled lamps. Thus the Cintāmaṇi palace is in the middle of the Śrīnagara. And the Bindupīṭha, the throne of the Devī, occupies a middle place in the Cintāmaṇigṛha. The detailed description found in the original of the abode of Lalitā reveals a sort of trans-cosmic splendour all about it. In the space between the Padmāṭavī and Cintāmaṇigṛha are in the first three enclosures Aṇimā and other Siddhi Devīs, Brāhmī and other mother goddesses, Samkṣobhiṇī and other Mudrā Devīs. These three enclosures go by the collective name of Trailokyamohanacakra, and the Śaktis here are collectively known Prakaṭayoginis. The fourth is sarvasaubhāgya dāyakam, the fifth is sarvārthasādhaka while the sixth is sarvarakṣākaram. The Mudrā Devīs, respectively for the fourth to the sixth are Sarvavaśyā, Sarvonmādinī and Sarvamahānkuśā. When we go to the seventh enclosure occupied by Rahasya yoginis, we find Kesarī, the Mudrā Devī. In the eighth enclosure are what are known as āyudhamaṇḍala, gurumaṇḍala, nityāmaṇḍala, besides ṣaḍangadevis. Above this is the Bindupīṭha, also known Śrīpīṭha, Mahāpīṭha, Vidyāpīṭha, and Ānandapīṭha. Here is a divine cot, its four legs being Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara and Īśvara. Sadāśiva represents the plank. There was again Hamsaphalika talpa with two upadhanas (cushions) for head and legs. Here lies Kāmeśvara Śiva. The thirty-six tattvas form the steps to reach it. In this cot over-spread by silk sits the ever youthful Lalitā on the lap of Kāmeśvara.[10]

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[9] *Ib.* ch. 31, 86-89. The legend goes that there was a great sage Matanga by name. His son Mātanga was a greater sage than the father. He performed tapas in honour of Mudrīṇī, otherwise known as Mantriṇī and Devī. Pleased with him the Devī asked him what he wanted. He wished that she should be known as his adopted daughter to the world at large. She agreed (Br. Purāṇa, IV, 31. 90-101).

The cakras of which several are distinguished were often marked with *mudras.* Each *mudra* was known by a different name like Draviṇika, and Karṣaṇika. These *mudras* are said to reside in the enclosures of the cakra and serve as guardians of the cakra, having the ability to bring all under their control.[11] Sarvajñādyantara, Vaśinyādyantara, are cakras which give all full protection and which prevent all diseases[12] of Bindupīṭha.[12a]

[10] *Ibid.,* ch. 37. 44-84.

[11] *Ibid.,* 36. 60-85.

[12] *Ibid.,* 91-96; ch. 37. 1-8.

[12a] More or less a similar description of Lalitā's dwelling is

The mode of procedure of worship of the cakra is then furnished. Waking up very early in the morning and remembering the divine lotus and meditating upon the guru, one should get out of his bed and after *śauca* and *snāna* (cleaning and bath) attire himself in pure clothes or silks and put on his caste marks. After sandhyā worship and prayer to the Sun one should offer three *arghyas* to Lalitā; and wedded to a vow of silence, he should enter the pūja room and after properly seating himself, he should meditate on Śrīnagar.[13]

After going through the technicalities of the pūja as ordained in the Āgama śāstras, the worshipper was to repeat the sacred mantra 36 lakhs of times, followed by *homa* 1/10 of the 36 lakhs, 1/10 of the latter *tarpaṇa,* and 1/10 of this number of Brahmans to be fed. Now was the turn for the worshipper to engage himself in the *Kāmyajapa, i.e.* attainment of a particular object. The efficacy depended on the number of times the *japa* was meditated upon. It is said that even the aṣṭasiddhis (the eight powers) would be obtained by such *japa.*[14]

referred to in the Saundaryalaharī of Śrī Śankarācārya and explained by the commentator Lakṣmīdhara. According to this there is a sea of ambrosia containing five celestial trees. Here is a pavilion made of jewel stones. There is a place in that pavilion constructed by the wish giving stone (Cintāmaṇi). The great goddess lies there in a couch which is Śiva, the legs of the couch being Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and Īśvara. Maheśāna is its coverlet and Sadāśiva its pillow. (vv. 8 and 92 Mysore ed. also R. G. Bhandarkar: Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc. pp. 144-5).

[13] Ch. 38. 1-29.

[14] *Ibid.*, 30-38.

SECTION 2

Lalitā cult and Kāñcī

Among the other places sacred to Lalitā is Kāñcī where the goddess enshrined goes by the name of Kāmākṣī. Here in this place Lalitā is said to have attained her *vyakti* as Kāmākṣī.[15] Legend has it that Kāñcī is one of the two eyes of Śiva, the other being Kāśī or Benares.[16] Though Kāñcī is celebrated as Viṣṇu Kṣetra by tradition, one is said to meet the divine presence of Śiva there.[17] Here, it is stated, in ages past Brahmā performed austerities to have a *darśan* of the Śrīdevī. There appeared before him Ādi-Lakṣmī with Vīṣṇu. Seeing her, Ādi-Lakṣmī, Mother of the three gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the Creator called her by name Kāmākṣī.[18] After praising her in choice expressions, Brahmā requested her to permeate that holy spot eternally with her divine presence for the welfare of the general people. To this the Devī agreed and made a request of her brother Viṣṇu to establish his divine manifestation also in that place.[19] Śiva also came to stay there and the marriage of Śiva took place with the Dēvī who came

[15] ललितासैव कामाक्षी कांच्यां व्यक्तिमुपागता।
सरस्वतीरमागौर्यः तामेवाद्यामुपासते॥
39.14

[16] नेत्रद्वयं महेशस्य काशीकाञ्चीपुरद्वयम्।
Ibid., 15.

[17] विख्यातं वैष्णवं क्षेत्रं शिवसांनिध्यकारकम्।
Ibid., 16.

[18] यामाहुस्त्रिपुरामेव ब्रह्मविष्ण्वीशमातरम्।
कामाक्षीति प्रसिद्धां तामस्तौषीत्पूर्णभक्तिमान्
Ibid., 21.

[19] श्रीदेवो सोदरं नत्वा पुण्डरीकाक्षमच्युतम्
तत्सांनिध्यं सदा कांच्यां प्रार्थयामास चादृतः॥
Ibid., 48.

out of the lovely look of Kāmākṣī.[20] Added to this is the mythical account that Pārvatī who was engaged in sport with Śiva prevented the continuance of Vaidika karma, and to atone for this Pārvatī was asked to perform penance on the banks of Kampā, and get relief from Mahālakṣmī.[21] At that time of separation Śiva is said to have lived under a mango tree (ekāmramūla).[22]

Other incidents which have added to the sanctity of Kāñcī are enumerated and we do not refer to them as they have nothing to do directly with the subject on hand.[23] The upāsana was done generally to Śrīcakra which is the embodiment of Mahālakṣmī and Tripurāmbikā. By worshipping this cakra, Viṣṇu is said to have attained the form of Kāmasammohinī, Śiva Sarvavidyeśvara, and Brahmā Brahmāṇḍasū.[24] This cakra should be worshipped every day with flowers and *naivedya* by repeating the *mūlamantra* a thousand times and *ṣoḍaśākṣara vidyā*. *Homa, tarpaṇa* and *Brahmana bhojana* are incidental to this worship. It was also permissible to make the cakras according to the established standards and infuse into them the divine presence. These cakras could be worshipped at home and are bound to give the desired results to their votaries. The cakra was differently written with nīli (blue) rasa, pīta (yellow) material and other colours. Prayers were offered to it meditating on Lalitā and pronouncing the *manu mantra.* And no doubt the Devī, it is said, gets pleased and awards what her votary asks for.[25]

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[20] Ch. 39. 50-63.

[21] On the birth of Lakṣmī and hymn of Mahālakṣmī see Devī Bhāgavatam, Bk. IX, ch. 39-42; Brahmavaivarta II ch. 22-3 and 39.

[22] Ch. 40. 10-40.

एकाम्रमूले भगवान्भवानी विरहार्तिमान्
गौरीसंप्राप्तये दध्यौ कामाक्षीं नियतेन्द्रियः ॥
Ibid., 37.

[23] See, however, ch. 40, 58-84; *Ibid.*, 84-137.

[24] Ch. 41. 3-6.

साक्षात्सैव महालक्ष्मीः श्रीचक्रमिति तत्वतः ।
यदभ्यर्च्य महाविष्णुः सर्वलोकविमोहनम् ॥
कामसंमोहिनीरूपं भेजे राजीवलोचनः ।
अर्चयित्वा तदीशानः सर्वविद्येश्वरोभवत् ॥
तदाराध्यविशेषेण ब्रह्मा ब्रह्माण्डसूरभूत् ।
मुनीनां मोहनश्चासीत्स्मरो पद्मरिवस्यया ॥

SECTION 3

The Cakra Pūjā

Each cakra was stamped with mudras or seals, and the mode of making them on the cakra is explained in extenso in chapter 42 of the Lalitopākhyāna portion of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.* Of the different mudras which are known by different names such as Samkṣobhiṇī, Ākarṣiṇī, Unmādinī and Mahāmkuśa, the Mahāmudrā is called Trikhaṇḍa. There was the first mudrā known as *bījamudrā* and *yoni mudrā.* These mudras are to be used according to prescription in the course of worship.

Next are furnished details with regard to consecration and the receiving of the initiatory mantra (Dīkṣā). In this consecration the guru or preceptor plays a significant role. It is he who initiates the śiṣya or pupil vowed to perform Cakra pūjā. There is first the *sparśadīkṣā* when the guru touches his pupil, thinking of Lalitādevī, then the *dṛkdīkṣā* when he looks at his disciple with grace and love, and *śāmbhavīdīkṣā* when he speaks to him words of wisdom. When this is finished, what is known as *kriyādīkṣā* is begun by the pupil, his thoughts being centred round his teacher (Deśikeśvara in his pūja room. Devī sūktam is then read. The end is reached by offering Puṣpāñjali with Sahasrākṣara vidyā.[26] This is given as follows:

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[25] *Ibid.*, 8-70.

ॐ ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः ॐ नमस्त्रिपुरसुन्दरि हृदये देवि शिरोदेवि शिखादेवि कवचदेवि नेत्रदेवि आस्यदेवि कामेश्वरि भगमालिनि नित्यक्लिन्ने भैरुंडे वह्निवासिनि महावज्रेश्वरि विद्येश्वरि परशिवदूति त्वरिते कुलसुन्दरि नित्ये नीलपताके विजये सर्वमङ्गले ज्वालामालिनि चित्रे महानित्ये परमेश्वरि मन्त्रेशमयि षष्ठीशमय्युद्यानमयि लोपामुद्रामय्यगस्त्यमयि कालतापनमयि धर्माचारमयि मुक्तकेशीश्वरमयि दीपकलानाथमयि विष्णुदेवमयि प्रभाकरदेवमयि तेजोदेवमयि मनोजदेवमयि अणिमसिद्धे महिमसिद्धे गरिमसिद्धे लघिमसिद्धे ईशित्वसिद्धे वशित्वसिद्धे प्राप्तिसिद्धे प्राकाम्यसिद्धे रससिद्धे मोक्षसिद्धे ब्राह्मि माहेश्वरि कौमारि वैष्णवि वाराहि इन्द्राणि चामुण्डे महालक्ष्मि सर्वसंक्षोभिणि सर्वविद्राविणि सर्वाकर्षणि सर्ववशंकरि सर्वोन्मादिनि सर्वमहांकुशे सर्वखेचरि सर्वबीजे सर्वयोनि सर्वास्त्रखंडिनि त्रैलोक्यमोहिनि चक्रस्वामिनि प्रकटयोगिनि बौद्धदर्शनाङ्गि कामाकर्षिणि बुद्ध्याकर्षिणि अहंकाराकर्षिणि शब्दाकर्षिणि स्पर्शाकर्षिणि रूपाकर्षिणि रसाकर्षिणि गन्धाकर्षिणि चित्ताकर्षिणि धैर्याकर्षिणि स्मृत्याकर्षिणि नामाकर्षिणि बीजाकर्षिणि आत्माकर्षिणि अमृताकर्षिणि शरीराकर्षिणि गुप्तयोगिनि सर्वाशापरिपूरकचक्रस्वामिनि अनङ्गकुसुमे अनङ्गमेखले अनङ्गमादिनि अनङ्गमदनातुरेऽनङ्गरेखेऽनङ्गवेगिन्यनङ्गांकुशेऽनङ्गमालिनि गुप्ततरयोगिनि वैदिकदर्शनांगि सर्वसंक्षोभकारकचक्रस्वामिनि पूर्वाम्नायाधिदेवते सृष्टिरूपे सर्वसंक्षोभिणि सर्वविद्राविणि सर्वाकर्षणि सर्वाह्लादिनि सर्वसंमोहिनि सर्वस्तंभिनि सर्वजृंभिणि सर्ववशंकरि सर्वरञ्जिनि सर्वोन्मादिनि सर्वार्थसाधिके सर्वसंपत्प्रपूरिणि सर्वमन्त्रमयि सर्वद्वन्द्वक्षयकरि संप्रदाययोगिनि सौरदर्शनाङ्गि सर्वसौभाग्यदायकचक्रे सर्वसिद्धिप्रदे सर्वसंपत्प्रदे सर्वप्रियङ्करि सर्वमङ्गलकारिणि सर्वकामप्रदे सर्वदुःखविमोचिनि सर्वमृत्युप्रशमिनि सर्वविघ्ननिवारिणि सर्वाङ्गसुन्दरि सर्वसौभाग्यदायिनि कुलोत्तीर्णयोगिनि सर्वार्थसाधकचक्रेशि सर्वज्ञे सर्वशक्ते सर्वैश्वर्यफलप्रदे सर्वज्ञानमयि सर्वव्याधिनिवारिणि सर्वाधारस्वरूपे सर्वपापहरे सर्वानन्द-

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[26] Ch. 43. 2-14.

मयि सर्वरक्षास्वरूपिणि सर्वेंप्सितफलप्रदे नियोगिनि वैष्णवदर्शनाङ्गि सर्वरक्षाकरचक्रस्थे दक्षिणाम्नायेशिस्थितिरूपे वशिनि कामेशि मोदिनि विमले अरुणे जयिनि सर्वेंश्वरि कौलिनि रहस्ययोगिनि रहस्यभोगिनि रहस्यगोपिनि शाक्तदर्शनाङ्गि सर्वरोगहरचक्रेशि पश्चिमाम्नाये धनुर्बाणपाशाङ्कुशदेवने कामेशि वज्रेशि भगमालिनि अतिरहस्ययोगिनि शैवदर्शनाङ्गि सर्वसिद्धिप्रदचक्रगे उत्तराम्नायेशि संहाररूपे शुद्धपरे बिन्दुपीठगते महा त्रिपुरसुन्दरि परापरातिरहस्ययोगिनि शांभवदर्शनाङ्गि सर्वानन्दमयचक्रेशि त्रिपुरे त्रिपुरेशि त्रिपुरसुन्दरि त्रिपुरवासिनि त्रिपुरश्रिः त्रिपुरमालिनि त्रिपुरसिद्धे त्रिपुरांब सर्व चक्रस्थे अनुत्तराम्नायाख्यस्वरूपे महात्रिपुरभैरवि चतुर्विधगुणरूपे कुले अकुले कुलाकुले महाकौलिनि सर्वोत्तरे सर्वदर्शनाङ्गि नवासनस्थिते नवाक्षरि नवमिथुनाकृते महेशमाघवविधातृमन्मथस्कन्दनन्दीन्द्रमनुचन्द्रकुबेरागस्त्यदुर्वासः क्रोधभट्टारकविद्यात्मिके कल्याणतत्वत्रयरूपे शिवशिवात्मिके पूर्णब्रह्मशक्ते महापरमेश्वरि महात्रिपुरसुन्दरि तव श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि नमः॥ क एं ईलह्रीं हस कहल ह्रीं सकल ह्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः सौः क्लीं ऐं श्रीं ॥
देव्याः पुष्पांजलिं दद्यात्सहस्राक्षरविद्यया ॥

Ch. 43.15

Then arcanā is offered to a kumbha with a coconut over it, bringing back to his memory the *Cintāmaṇi mantra* according to the prescription of his Deśika. He prostrates to the guru who instructs him with ṣoḍāśārṇamanu secretly in his left ear and purifies him by pouring the kumbha water on his head. Then the process is continued three times and by Samādhi the votary becomes a Brahmībhūta or one with Brahman.[27] This form of worship of Devī could be done by all irrespective of sex or caste.[28] This is the normal form or popular form of Śakti ceremonial. This is effected by what is known as frequent nyāsa which is an assignment of the various parts of the body to deities usually accompanied with prayers and corresponding gesticulation. The whole chapter describes in short the Ṣaṇnyāsa or the six ways of touching the body repeating mystical texts. Then was the nyāsa to Śrī enshrined in the Cakra. Here are involved Indra and other gods, Aṇimā and other siddhis, the eight mothers, mudrā devīs and so on, and lastly Cakreśī.[28a] Fixing his eyes on the yonimudrā, the devotee should meditate Sarvānandamanu. Finally he is blessed by the Cakra devī. What is aimed at in this mode of worship is the intensive concentration of the mind on the Devī.

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[27] *Ibid.*, 16-46.

[28] *Ibid.*, 80-81. The name of Kāmākṣī is mentioned in this connection.

SECTION 4

Śākta Schools

A study of the Lalitopākhyāna as appended to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* exhibits only one form of the Śakti worship, namely the ordinary mild form. But this is not the only form on which Śakti worship is based. There are other schools of Śāktas who propitiate her in other forms. Two schools can generally be distinguished. One is that represented by the worship of Lalitā by means of mystic circles or cakras. This is the common school of worshippers who are not Śāktas so called, but who are still devotees of Devī. This is the worship of the Devī in the ordinary mild form. The other is the school of Śāktas who propitiate her in her fierce form. In this form she is known as Durgā, Kālī, Karālā, Caṇḍī, and Cāmuṇḍī. These are said to dwell in forests and mountains and form objects of worship to wild tribes like Pulindas and Śabaras. Among the objects with which these Devīs were propitiated were wine, flesh and even human beings. Some of the names given such as Caṇḍi, Cāmuṇḍā and Kauśikā are not mere names but indicate, as R. G. Bhandarkar notes, 'different goddesses who owed their conception to different historical conditions.' According to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* Caṇḍī was the goddess who vanquished the buffalo-demon (Mahīṣāsura), and who was created for that purpose out of the fierce effulgence of Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu.[29] Cāmuṇḍā is the name of the Devī who discomfited the Asuras Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.[30] In the *Mālatīmādhava* she is said to be propitiated with human sacrifices.[31] She is even to this day the tutelary deity of the Mahārājas of Mysore. Kauśikī is the goddess who killed Śumbha and Niśumbha. Originally a resident of Pātāla, Nidrā Kālarūpiṇī (sleep in the form of destroying time) was approached by Viṣṇu to be born of the daughter of Yaśodā and consequently sister of Kṛṣṇa. When Kamsa dashed the baby, which he took to be the daughter of his sister, against a stone, the body took the form of a goddess and cursed him from the air. She then made the Vindhya mountain her abode and killed the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha.[32] These goddesses marked largely by ferocity went by the common appellation Durgā and as we have already seen the Durgā-cult is one among those mentioned by this section of *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,* and quite popular with the followers of the Brahmanical religion also.

[28a] Chh. 44-45.

In the Āgamas, as many as nine Durgās are mentioned. These are Nīlakaṇṭhī (bestower of wealth and happiness), Kṣemankarī (bestower of health), Harasiddhi (fulfilling votary's desires), Rudrāmśa Durgā with lion as her vehicle, Vana-Durgā with eight hands of which seven held weapons, Agni Durgā with eight hands of which six only had weapons and with lion for vehicle, Jaya Durgā (bestower of siddhi), Vindhyāvāsi Durgā with her lion vehicle, and Ripumārī Durgā (destroyer of enemies).[33]

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[29] Ch. 82.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Act V.

[32] See Harivamśa, vv. 3236, *ff*.

[33] T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Hindu Iconography,* pp. 342-45.

CHAPTER III

ŚAKTISM THROUGH THE AGES

SECTION 1

Śaktism in the Indus Valley

The foregoing analysis of the Lalitopākhyāna section of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* leads us to conclude, as we have said at the very commencement of the thesis, that the Lalitā cult was only a phase of the general Śakti cult. It is worth while at this point to trace its historical origins. It has been maintained all along that the worship of Śakti as a goddess is a later development of Hinduism when the Tantra śāstra became more and more popular. But this view has now been entirely thrust aside by the evidence of prehistoric archaeology. Among the objects discovered in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, it is interesting to see specimens of the *yoni*, and from this it has been rightly concluded that the cult of the Mother Goddess was already prevalent in the Indus Valley of the Indian continent in the Chalcolithic period. Sir John Marshall who has examined these specimens is much struck by the correspondence of cults in Egypt, Phoenicia, Asia Minor and Greece with Indian Śaktism. Among the objects of worship are many ring-stones which are supposed to have possessed magical properties. These stones were associated with some goddess of fertility, an idea carried down the ages. For in the Mauryan period the ring-stones discovered at Taxila are associated with the same idea. In these ring-stones, nude figures of a goddess of fertility are engraved inside the central hole 'thus indicating in a manner that can hardly be mistaken the connection between them and the female principle'.[1]

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[1] *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization,* Vol. I, pp. 57-58 and 61-63; See also E. Mackay: *The Indus Civilization* (London) (1935) pp. 66-68.

Thus in the opinion of Sir John Marshall, Śakti worship originated in India out of the cult of Mother Goddess, and it was closely connected with the cult of Śiva. 'Parallels of this Indian Śaktism are found in Asia Minor, Egypt, in Phoenicia, in Greece, and 'in their fundamental ideas the correspondence of these cults with Indian Śaktism is sufficiently striking.' The close resemblance between the cult of the Mother Goddess as realised in the Indus Valley and that of Sumeria is at once wonderful and interesting. First, the lion was the vehicle of the Goddess in both countries, while the bull was the vehicle of Her Consort. Secondly, the Goddess was conceived in both places as a war-goddess. The third was the manifestation of the goddess as a virgin, and as a wedded lady. Fourthly, in both countries the goddess is intimately associated with hills and mountains. Lastly, even the term Nana which is the name of the goddess in Sumeria is preserved in the Indian name Nana Devi enshrined at Hinglaj in Gujarat.[2] This means that the cult of Śakti had been once universal, and the goddess venerated was Mother Goddess (Sanskrit Ambā Lokamātā) throughout the ancient world. It is too early to suggest the original home of the cult, though we would not be far wrong if we state that India might take that credit to herself. And it is just possible that one day we may alight on materials which would trace the institution to a common origin and common culture.

Thanks to the spade of the archaeologist, one thing is certain, *viz.*, the prevalence of Śaktism roughly 3,000 B.C. Whether the culture of the Indus Valley preceded or succeeded the age of the Ṛg Veda Samhitā is still a matter of opinion among scholars.[3] A study of the two cultures reveals that the Indus Valley civilisation is much more complex, much more developed and much more urbane than that of the Ṛg Veda. In the

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[2] See Cal. Review, 1913, pp. 235-6.

[3] See my article The Culture of the Indus Valley in the *Journal of Madras University* (1933).

Samhitā it is all village life, and we have only meagre vestiges of civic life and civic consciousness. It represents a stage of transition from village life to town life. Ṛg Vedic worship is largely of elements and nature. There is little evidence of iconic worship. We meet with quite a different picture in the Indus Valley,—fully developed corporate life and widely prevalent different cults. These have tempted some scholars to conclude that this culture may be treated as post Ṛg-Vedic in character.[4]

SECTION 2

Probable Origins

Be that as it may, let us examine how the conception of Mother cults arose. There is of course the fertility theory.

Appropriate to this concept is the Hindu conception of the Earth as the Mother, and her intimate association with agriculture. It is generally believed that in primitive times when man was yet uncivilised, he looked upon Earth as a personification of the deity of fertility. There is nothing improbable in this. But the Vedic and post-Vedic conception of Earth was not actuated solely by the fertility cult. She was looked upon as a guardian deity. The Ṛg Veda Samhitā refers to the pair Dyāvā Pṛthvī, divinities whom the Vedic people regarded as universal parents. The idea was perhaps that Dyaus or Heaven was the consort of Pṛthvī or Earth.[5] In the Ṛg Veda Samhitā (V. 84) and in the Atharva Veda (XII.1) she is prominently mentioned. Still the Vedic Indian meant by

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[4] No finality can however be claimed until the script is satisfactorily deciphered. The Rev. Fr. Heras is endeavouring to decipher it as Tamil.

[5] कर्शफस्य विशफस्य द्यौः पिता पृथिवी माता ।
A. V. III.9.

Pṛthvī the whole of the earth. For do we not read in the hymns[6] that she is the chief support of trees and mountains? Her chief trait was the *dṛḍhatā* or firmness. In a hymn it is definitely stated that Pṛthvī was the Mother Earth to whom the dead person went. It appears that the idea of man being born of the earth going back to the earth after his death had been well realised by the Vedic Indian. That he looked upon earth as Mother and as kindly Mother (X. 18) cannot be questioned.[6a]

It stands to reason that the origin of the cult should be traced to the aboriginals, peoples who lived in very primitive times and who seemed to have been, for ages together, in the matriarchal stage. By proper nourishment and nursing the mother evokes the affection, love and veneration of the child from its babyhood to adolescence. Perhaps this incon-

[6] सत्यं बृहदृतमुग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।
सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरुं लोकं पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥ 1
... ...
नानावीर्या ओषधीर्या बिभर्ति पृथिवी न प्रथतां राध्यतां नः ॥ 2
... ...
यस्य श्चतस्रः प्रदिशः पृथिव्या यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः संबभूवुः । 4
... ...
विश्वस्वं मातरमोषधीनां ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीं धमर्णा धृताम् ।
शिवां स्योनामनु चरेम विश्वहा । 17
... ...
शिला भूमिरश्मा पांसुः सा भूमिः संधृता धृता ।
तस्यै हिरण्यवक्षसे पृथिव्या अकरं नमः ॥ 26
यस्यां वृक्षा वानस्पत्या ध्रुवास्तिष्टन्ति विश्वहा ।
पृथिवीं विश्वधायसं ध्रुवामच्छावदामसि ॥ 27
... ...
भूमे मातर्निधेहि मा भद्रया सुप्रतिष्ठितम् ।
संविदाना दिवा कवे श्रियां मा धेहि भूत्याम् ॥ 63

[6a] Macdoneli, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

trovertible fact made the Veda prescribe first *mātṛ devo bhava*, and then *pitṛ devo bhava.* This again explains why the poet of later days sang in a soul stirring verse

Jananī Janmabhūmiśca svargādapi garīyasī.

Thus the veneration and love of mother has been instilled into our minds even from childhood. The indispensable nature of the services which the mother does for the sake of her children imbued the ancient minds with so much reverence that even a politician like Kauṭalya prescribes that mother under any condition, even though a *patitā* or a fallen woman, should not be discarded but should be afforded protection.

But ages passed and the matriarchal system gave way to the almost universal patriarchal system. Even then the old concept of mother-veneration was not abandoned. It stuck on with a persistence all its own. With the widening of the concept a number of mother goddesses sprang up. It was no more the single Dame Earth that possessed all the attributes of a mother to persons living on the earth. By her unfailing supply of vegetation and other amenities, people could slake their thirst and satisfy their hunger. She gave birth in course of time to a number of lokamātas of whom the Purāṇas mention generally seven. These are: Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Māhendrī and Cāmuṇḍī.[7] They are special manifestations of the one Devī on whom depends the welfare of the world at large. Hence all of them attained the status of Mother Goddess and are worshipped as such even to this day in India.

SECTION 3

Śaktism in Vedic Literature

Historians of Śaktism, as has been already said, have always claimed a pre-Vedic origin of the cult, and have stated categorically that there is no Vedic evidence regarding the prevalence of the cult. But the latter statement cannot stand critical examination. If it is contended that the term śakti is not found in Vedic texts,[8] to that extent it can be held true. Whether the term is there or not the fact remains that a number of goddesses are really mentioned and that in different capacities. And each goddess, whether you call her so or not, was a Śakti or personification of female energy. The fact that in the Ṛg Veda Samhitā and other books it is the male divinities that preponderate, and not female ones, can be however accepted. But the acceptance of this position would not and could not contradict the view that śakti worship was Vedic or pre-Vedic. We have already seen that Mother Earth has been assigned the guardianship of the world, and she was already an important deity evoking universal regard due to her services to both the animate and inanimate worlds on the earth. The origin of the Earth Cult[9] may be primitive and may belong to pre-Vedic days when man was still in a low level of culture. The early man found in Earth the personification of creative power as she supplied him with food and other things for him to lead a life of ease, peace and plenty; so he glorified her as a goddess and perhaps worshipped her in her nude form. And no wonder the Vedic peoples realised the importance of the cult and gave it, as it were, a fillip by making Earth as the very guardian deity.[10]

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[7] Some add Mahālakṣmī and make the number eight.

Among other goddesses celebrated by the Vedas are Uṣas and Aditi. Uṣas was the goddess of Dawn. Uṣas may be a representation of Dawn as a deity. The night is all dark and fearful. It represents evil and sin. The ushering in of the day and the disappearance of the night brought cheer and joy to the Vedic man and he sang hymns in praise of that glorious dawn, a personification of the goddess of good hope. As many as twenty hymns of the Ṛg Veda celebrate this goddess, sometimes as a maiden of beauty and promise, sometimes as the daughter of Dyaus or heaven and at other times as being driven in a car, with the sun's light pursuing her, even as a lover a gay maiden. At her approach, all creatures wake up from their slumber and begin to move about and be active. In fact she infuses fresh life into everything including vegetation. As a fine example of how the Vedic Indian welcomed Uṣas, the reader is referred to hymn 1.113 of the Ṛg Veda Samhitā. In more than one place she is designated 'mother of cattle.'[11]

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[8] Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad and Kenopaniṣad contain references to Umā as we shall see in the following pages.

[9] For a Purāṇic origin of the Śakti of the Earth, see *Devī Bhāg*. Bk. IX, Ch. 9.

[10] See, for example, the whole of the first hymn of the Atharva Veda, Bk. XII, already referred to.

Side by side with Uṣas, mention is made of Rātrī or night. She is also personified and she is also a daughter of Dyaus. Thus Rātrī becomes a sister of Uṣas, and as the daughter of Dyaus, the dark side of the picture could not present itself to the Vedic Indian. He looked upon her as a bright night, bright with stars. She holds such an important place in the Vedic pantheon that a special hymn is addressed to her.[12] In this hymn a prayer is sent to her to protect the householder from the havoc of wild beasts and the ravages of thieves. For it is only during nights that wild beasts go out in search of prey and especially human prey. Again it is a favourable time for robbers to move about unnoticed in the gloom and seize property. Though Rātrī occupies a subordinate position in the Vedic pantheon, still she is invoked by the Vedic Indian and fervent prayer is sent to her.

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[11] Macdonell: Vedic Mythology, p. 409.

[12] रात्री व्यख्यदायती पुरुत्रा देव्यक्षभिः ।....
ज्योतिषा वाधते तमः ।
निरु स्वसारमस्कृतोषसंदेव्यायती । अपेदु हासते तमः।
निग्रामासो अविक्षत नि पद्वंतो नि पक्षिणः । नि श्येनासश्चिदर्थिनः ।
यावया वृक्यं वृकंयवयस्तेन मूर्त्यै अथा नः सुतरां भव ।....उप ते गाः
इवाकरं वृणीष्व दुहितर्दिवः । रात्रिस्तोमं न जिग्युषे ।
R. V. X.127

The next goddess of any importance is Aditi. About this deity of an abstract character Professor Macdonell says: 'Aditi, a goddess of Indian origin, is historically younger than some at least of her sons, who can be traced back to a pre-Indian age.'[13] Her sons were undoubtedly Ādityas, and Varuṇa, as is well known, is one of the Ādityas. The term Aditi in its ordinary sense stands for freedom, and as Professor Macdonell believes it was freedom from physical ills and moral ills. A person is apt to fall ill physically and commit evil which passes beyond all canons of morality. He seeks to get himself liberated from them, and relief comes by offering prayers to the goddess Aditi. She and her sons are personifications of freedom. A prayer sent forth to Ādityas had the same effect as a prayerful request to Aditi herself. It is a fact of the utmost significance that some special hymns[14] celebrate Aditi, and the term is one of frequent and common occurrence in the hymns in general. It is difficult to subscribe to the view of Professor Macdonell that the sons of Aditi are older than Aditi. The idea of sons being older than the mother fails to convince us even in a matter of abstraction unless Macdonell would say that these gods were known earlier under other names and later identified as sons of Aditi. The hymns, if they are critically studied, point out that the sons of Aditi by virtue of their functions and power became much more powerful than their mother and practically eclipsed the power of Aditi. She is depicted as the mother of heroic sons and kings.[15] The trait of motherhood is prominent in several hymns.[16]

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[13] A History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 103.

[14] *Aditir dyaur aditir antarikṣam*
aditir mātā sa pitā sa putraḥ
viśvedevā aditiḥ pañca-janāḥ
aditir jātaṁ aditir janitvam.

Other goddesses[17] are (1) Vāk who is a personification of speech. She aids all gods in their different and difficult undertakings, and one hymn gives her the distinct appellation of the queen of gods and celestials. In the words of Professor Macdonell 'she bends Rudra's bow against the unbeliever'. In a sūktam[18] which tradition associates with Devī, Vāk who is primordial force of Brahman manifests Brahman or the Supreme Being.

(2) Puramdhi, identified not without justification with the Avestan Parendi, is the goddess of wealth and abundance.

(3) Dhiṣaṇā is again another goddess of plenty.

(4) Ilā is the goddess who represents nourishment, and is associated with the offering of butter and milk, and is sometimes designated as the mother of the herd (yūtha). Rākā and Sinīvālī, Pṛśni, Bṛhaddevā are other goddesses of Vedic literature and are celebrated in one way or other as mother of gods. If we examine the places where these goddesses are mentioned, they invariably refer to the mother god. Thus the mother cultus is not new or foreign to the Ṛg Veda Samhitā or later Vedic literature. The conception may be older than the Vedic times and a pre-Vedic one. But one cannot subscribe to the view that it is un-Vedic or non-Vedic. It may be that the Vedic Indian absorbed the existing

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[15] A.V. iii, 8.

हुवे देवीमदितिं शूरपुत्रां सजातानां ममध्यमेष्ठा यथासानि।

[16] Macdonell: Vedic Mythology pp. 120-123.

[17] *Ibid.* pp. 124-5.

[18] R. V. X. 125.

belief or developed an independent cultus. Whatever this may be the fact remains that mother cult holds a prominent place in the Vedic cults enumerated. One is only struck by the continuity and the antiquity of this cult in India.

We referred to a certain *Devī sūktam* in the Ṛg Veda, the Devī celebrated being Vāk. It is not explicitly called *Devī sūktam* by the Ṛg Vedic bard. There is another popular tradition which makes *Śrī sūktam* a khila or an appendix of the Ṛg Veda, just as the Harivamśa is said to be a khila of the epic Mahābhārata. This *Śrī sūktam,* which still obtains currency in the worship of Devī in India cannot claim so much antiquity as the Vedic Samhitā. Its authorship is certainly unknown and there is no clue to trace it. According to a recent writer[19] there is a reference in this *sūktam* to slaves male and female, and perhaps these are slaves of Alexander's time. And also it is popular because it possesses some alchemic secret in which dried cowdung (karīṣiṇī) is used. This *Śri sūktam* contains fifteen Ṛks, and has several commentaries. The whole sūktam is in honour of Śrī or the Goddess of Wealth. In the first verse the goddess is invoked through Agni, for we all know that according to Vedic conception Agni was the messenger of gods in general. The last quarter of the first verse makes a reference to puruṣān which is taken to be a synonym for slaves; whether the expression puruṣān means slaves or something else, the question is still open. Apparently the term stands for something else. The interpretation as family may be accepted. The third verse refers to the three divisions of the army which are a means to obtain wealth. Passing over the fourth and fifth verses which bear no special significance, the sixth shows that *bilva* was produced from the palm of the goddess. [*Cf.* Srinivasaraghavan

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[19] M. V. Kibe: JAHRS, Jan. 1935. This explanation is unsatisfactory. They may be only servants of both sexes and not slaves. They may be compared to *vīras* in the Śatarudrīya.

Translation]. The succeeding verses do not interest us much except for the fact that the goddess is identified with the sun and the moon. The fifteenth and last verse again is said to refer to slaves.[21]

Among the Vedic books again nowhere does the Śrī Vidyā which is the Samayamārga of the Śāktas, find such interesting exposition as in a whole Prapāṭhaka of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka. This Prapāṭhaka is otherwise known as Yājñikya Upaniṣad whose composition is attributed to Nārāyaṇa as the protector of Yajña.[22] Vidyāraṇya has expressed it as his opinion that this Prapāṭhaka is khila or a supplement to the original book. This means that this portion is much later than the other Prapāṭhakas. Notwithstanding the view taken by Vidyāraṇya, tradition has credited this portion of the Āraṇyaka as a genuine part of the Veda, and it has been handed down from teacher to pupil through the ages. Several passages from this Prapāṭhaka may be examined.[23]

First, we find a reference to five Gāyatrīs.[24] Of these the Durgā gāyatrī forms the fourth. She is represented as the wife of Katyāyana, meditated upon as Kanyākumarī or Kanyākumari. She is Durgī or the form of Agni designated Durgā.

कात्यायनाय विद्महे कन्यकुमारि धीमहि । तन्नो दुर्गिः प्रचोदयात् ।

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] This conception of Hari is quite familiar to Purāṇas. This is the first anuvāka of the tenth Prapāṭhaka, otherwise called *Nārāyaṇopaniṣad.* (Ānandāsrama series).

[23] This forms the sixth Prapāṭhaka of the Mysore edition with the bhāṣya of Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara, while it forms the 10th Prapāṭhaka of the Bibliotheca Indica edition by R. Mitra.

[24] The five Gāyatrīs are Śiva gāyatrī, Vighneśa gāyatrī, Garuḍa gāyatrī, Durgā gāyatrī and Viṣṇu gāyatrī.

Secondly, dūrva (plant sacred to Hari and Hara)[25] which is generally placed on the head at the time of one's bath for the sake of auspiciousness is addressed as Devī and prayed to for removing bad dreams.

सहस्रपरमा देवी शतमूला शताङ्कुरा ।
सर्वं हरतु मे पापं दूर्वा दुःस्वप्ननाशिनी ।।

Thirdly, Devī is addressed as the Earth and by different names. She is asked to remove all sins and endow a person with long life and health.

अश्वक्रान्ते रथक्रान्ते विष्णुक्रान्ते वसुन्धरा ।
शिरसा धारिता देवी रक्षस्व मां पदे पदे ।।
उद्धृताऽसि वराहेण कृष्णेव शतबाहुना ।
भूमिर्धेनुर्धरणी लोकधारिणी ।
मृत्तिके हन मे पापं यन्मया दुष्कृतं कृतम् ।
त्वया हतेन पापेन जीवामि शरदःशतम् ।।
मृत्तिके देहि मे पुष्टिं त्वयि सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
गन्धद्वारां दुराधर्षां नित्यपुष्टां करीषिणीम् ।
ईश्वरीं सर्वभूतानां तामिहोपह्वये श्रियम् ।।

Fourthly, Vāruṇī is one of the deities invoked in this *praśna.* It is noteworthy that both Varuṇa and Vāruṇī are separately mentioned in a passage where Agni, Indra and others are also invoked but not their consorts. This shows the importance given to Vāruṇī in the pantheon.

हिरण्यशृङ्गं वरुणं प्रपद्ये तीर्थं मे देहि याचितः ।....
तन्न इन्द्रो वरुणो बृहस्पतिः सविता च पुनन्तु पुनः पुनः ।

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[25] See Bhāg. P. V. 3. 6,

नमोऽग्नयेऽप्सुमते नम इन्द्राय नमो वरुणाय नमो वारुण्यै नमोऽद्भ्यः ....

Fifthly, we have Daurga Mantras, five in number. Special offerings and prayers to Durgā Devī are prescribed to rid one of the fear of thieves, wild beasts, evil spirits and of other difficulties. Here too reference is made to fire as the rūpa of Durgā.*

जातवेदसे सुनवाम सोममरातीयतो निदहाति वेदः ।
स नः पर्षदति दुर्गाणि विश्वा नावेव सिन्धुं
दुरितात्यग्निः । तामग्निवर्णां तपसा ज्वलन्तीं
वैरोचनीं कर्मफलेषु जुष्टाम् ।
दुर्गां देवीं शरणमहं प्रपद्ये सुतरसि तरसे नमः ॥

Sixthly, in the eleventh and twelfth *anuvākas,* the Brahman is regarded as two in one the Umāmahesvara svarūpa.

Ṛtam Satyam Param Brahma Puruṣam Kṛṣṇapingalam |
urdhvaretam
Virūpākṣam Viśvarūpāya vai namah.

Satyam is twofold: vyāvahārikam as in the Hiraṇyagarbharūpa and Pāramārthika as seen in *Ṛtam Satyam.* Thus the *anuvāka* (18) speaks of Hiraṇyapati, Ambikāpati and Umāpati. The term Ambā from ambayati refers to the creation of the world; and Umā represents the condition of the dissolution of the world when she stands as Parāśakti.

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*We hear of nine Durgas celebrated in the mantra śāstra. Among them Agni Durgā is one. (see the Comment of Sāyaṇācārya). In Mantrārṇava (śūlini kalpam) the following occurs:

Agni durgā mahā durgā mūla durgā iti nāmatah|
Vana durgā tatah paścāt śūla durgāti śūlinī|
Tāsām tu śūlinī devī mahā krūri iti kīrtitā||

See also Kṛṣṇa yajurveda: Taitti. Āraṇyaka Prapā. 10 Anu I and also Anuvāka II.7.

नमो हिरण्यबाहवे हिरण्यपतयेऽम्बिकापतय उमापतये नमो नमः ।

प्रपञ्चदशायां अम्बिका देवी भवति । प्रपञ्चविलये तु परशक्तिरूपेण स्थिता प्रणवपर्यायेण उमा शब्देनोच्यते ॥

Seventhly, Aditi as the mother of all creatures is hymned and is synonymous with Earth.[26]

अदितिर्देवा गन्धर्वा मनुष्याः पितरोऽसुरास्तेषां
सर्वभूतानां माता मेदिनी महती मही सावित्री
गायत्री जगत्युर्वी पृथ्वी बहुला विश्वा भूता
कतमा काया सा सत्येत्यमृतेति वसिष्ठः ।

Eighthly, the hymn to Gāyatrī forms the *anuvāka* (26). The *anuvāka* (30) should be read with this, where the invoked Devī is asked to go about as she pleases.

Ninthly, there is the invocation to Devī as Medhā (all-intelligence), Viśvācī (all-pervading), Bhadrā (all-auspicious) and Sumansyamānā (all-gracious). She is asked to promote one's welfare and wealth.[27] The succeeding three *anuvākas* are prayers to gods in general to endow one with medha. Here occur the names of Sarasvatī and Surabhi (*anuvākas* 40 and 42).

The above analysis of the Prapāṭhaka would demonstrate beyond doubt that the germs of Samaya mārga are already visible in the Vedic literature and the Śakti cultus has become popular by the time of the composition of the Āraṇyaka. To repeat, though male divinities seem to dominate the religion of the early Vedic India, female divinities too have taken their place of importance

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26. See the anuvāka, 21.
27. Anuvāka, 39.

in the later Vedic epoch. The invocation to different Devīs shows the hold which Śakti cult had on the Vedic Indian.

Students of Vedic mythology have been much exercised by the term Umā Haimavatī occurring in the Kena Upaniṣad, otherwise known as Talavakāra Upaniṣad. The third and fourth Khaṇḍas of this Upaniṣad[28] form an interesting disquisition on Brahman designated Yakṣa, and state how Vedic gods like Agni, Vāyu, and Indra were originally ignorant of It, how Agni and Vāyu who went to know It were discomfited and how Indra was able to get at It through the help of Umā Haimavatī. It is said that when Indra went near It, the latter disappeared. But Indra saw an exceedingly beautiful woman who told him on enquiry that It was Brahman. Thus Indra was the first to realise Brahman.

Weber was perhaps the first Indologist to enter into an extensive discussion of the identity of Umā and of the divinities mentioned here in relation to the later developments.[29] Commentators of this passage say that Umā is here an allegorical representation of 'Knowledge'. But in later literature she figures as the consort of Śiva. The origin of the Umā cultus can go back to the Samhitā portion of Vedic literature. Mahīdhara and Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara who have commented on the Śukla Yajus and Kṛṣṇa Yajus have explained the term 'saumā' as

उमा=ब्रह्मविद्या तया सह वर्तमानः सोमः परमात्मा

In the light of this interpretation it is reasonable to explain Umā in the Upaniṣad passage as Brahmavidyā. Umā must therefore begin as a common epithet standing for the Śakti of Brahman, for the wife of Brahmā and for Śrīvidyā. We must not import later sectarian developments into the early works. Umā may again admit

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[28] Hume, Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads, pp. 337-39.

[29] Indische Studien II, 186-190.

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of an etymological interpretation, and be connected with the significant expression OM.[30] Here we may remark without any fear of contradiction that we meet for the first time with the germs of the Purāṇic conception of Umā. According to Śankarabhāṣya Umā is Vidyā who dispelled the ignorance of Indra. Through her alone He is realisable. Both Brahman and Vidyā are inseparable. This, as we know, is the fundamental doctrine of the Śāktas.

This concept of the Upaniṣad finds an extended explanation in a whole chapter (4) of the Brahmagītā portion of the Sūta Samhitā. This chapter which contains one hundred and fifty-three ślokas is said to be a commentary on Talavakāropaniṣad. Among these the following stanzas may be quoted here with profit.

विद्याया आश्रयत्वेन विषयत्वेन वा भवेत् ।
ब्रह्म नैवान्यथा तत्र ब्रह्म ब्रह्म भवेत्कथम् ।।
ब्रह्मसंबन्धहीना चेद्विद्या ब्रह्म तु वेदितुम् ।
अशक्यं तत्र हे देवाः को वा ब्रह्मात्मविद्भवेत् ।।
ब्रह्मण्यध्यस्त मायादिनिवृत्तिं कुरुते तु सा ।
विद्या यदि न मायायाः प्रत्यगात्मन्यसंभवात् ।।
25—27.

The substance of this chapter is that Brahman is un-understandable without vidyā. That is why this concept is *advaita*.[31] There is nothing apart from Brahman. Appropriate to this the Śruti says

Neha nānāsti kiñcana[32]

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[30] Umā is explained by Śrikaṇṭha and Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara as Praṇava-vyasyaya: AUM=UMA.

[31] Sūta S., 31-32, 44.

[32] *Ibid.*, 55.

This Brahman may be designated Śiva, Viṣṇu or anything. After explaining this philosophic concept, the Purāṇa introduces the story that once there was a Devāsura war in which the gods obtained victory through the help of Iśvara and were proud of it totally ignorant of Brahman. So the Lord appeared before them in the form of a Yakṣa to dispel their delusion. Agni went to Him but could not burn a straw. Vāyu went near but could not remove it even by an inch. Both came shame-faced by their inability to do even a simple thing. So Indra went and prayed for knowledge and light. Umā appeared before him and said that it was Brahman and Her Lord. She went away.[33] Some of the Upaniṣads which can undoubtedly be said to belong to the later epochs in Indian History contain their references to and glorifications of the Śakti cult. There are Tripuropaniṣad, Tripuratāpinī Upaniṣad, Bhāvanopaniṣad, Devyupaniṣad and others. The Tripuropaniṣad forms the 85th in the order of 108 Upaniṣads (published by the Nirnayasagar Press, Bombay, 1925, third edition). The Upaniṣad contains sixteen Ṛks and tradition assigns it to the Sakala branch of the Ṛg Veda Samhitā. The philosophic basis of the system is briefly told in the first six ṛks of the Upaniṣad while the last ten ṛks are an abstract of the different modes of worship offered to the Devī.[34] In this Upaniṣad, the Devī is celebrated as Tripurā as in the Tripuratāpinya Upaniṣad.

The Tripuratāpini Upaniṣad begins with a prefatory stanza which is a prayer sent to Śakti in the aspect of Tripurātāpinī vidyā,

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33. *Ibid.*, 86-113. Compare with the version above.

34. There is an elaborate commentary on this by Bhāskara Rāya who was an honoured member of the royal court of Tanjore in the 18th century. It may be noted here that Bhāskara Rāya has also commented on the Bhāvanopaniṣad, the Kaulopaniṣad and other Tantric works.

which is *param tattvam*[35] This consists of five upaniṣads. The first upaniṣad deals with meditation of Devī who is said to constitute the Gāyatrī akṣaras. Of these, 15 akṣaras form the Tripura of the Tripurā. Among other names, she is known as Trikūṭā, Tripurā, Māyā, Vaiṣṇavī and Mahālakṣmī. The second upaniṣad is a short exposition on the vyakti of the Tripuram. The composition of the various cakras together with mudras is described. The next upaniṣad is a further elaboration of the mudras and mode of worship. The fourth upaniṣad begins with Traipurāṣṭaka in honour of Tryambikā and ends with an invocation to offer daily prayers to Devī as Gāyatrī in the morning, Sāvitrī[36] in the afternoon, and Sarasvatī in the evening. The last upaniṣad purports to be an exposition of Kriyākāṇḍa section of Tripura, where a good number of Pīṭhas are given—ākāśa pīṭha, spārśana, tejaḥ pīṭha, amṛta pīṭha, and ratna piṭha. He who realises the Devī thus enjoys absolute bliss.

The Bhāvanopaniṣad is yet another work of the class which treats of the Śakti cultus. It is said to belong to the Atharvaṇa Veda and is a small work of two pages. Its treatment of the subject is something novel and has evoked an interesting commentary from Bhāskara Rāya (published in the Bibliotheca Sanskrita series of Mysore, Vol. II). It treats of the Śrīcakra as the human body, and its several layers as the different parts of the body. Towards the end, the Pādya, Arghya, Naivedya, Homa, etc., connected with Śrī worship are figuratively explained. Everything takes the form of *bhāvana.*

[35] त्रिपुरातापिनीविद्यावेद्यचिच्छक्तिविग्रहम् ।
वस्तुतश्चिन्मात्ररूपं परं तत्वं भजाम्यहम् ॥

[36] अथ गायत्री सावित्री सरस्वत्यजपा मातृका प्रोक्ता तया सर्वमिदं व्याप्तमिति (20)

Sāvitra japa leads to jñāna (Sūta Sam. Ch. VI, 60).

We must say a word about the Devyupaniṣad. It contains 21 ślokas. The Upaniṣad begins with the statement that gods waited upon the Devī and questioned who she was. She says that she is the manifestation of different things, gods and powers. Then the gods praised her and offered their prayers as Mahāvidyā, representing the eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas, Viśve Devas, Asuras, Rākṣasas, Piśācas, etc. Even great gods like Brahmā could not realise her truth and hence she is designated ajñeyā. She is Anantā as her end cannot be determined. She is Alakṣyā because she cannot be grasped. She is Ajā because she has no birth. She is Ekā because she is everywhere. She is Naikā as she is Viśvarūpiṇī. She is Durgā because she guards us against difficulties. This Upaniṣad is to be regarded Atharvaṇā śīrṣa.

There are two more Upaniṣads which are popularly current as Kaulopaniṣad and Tārakopaniṣad. It is not possible to assign definite dates to these works but it is probable that these are much later than the works we have surveyed above. The Kaulopaniṣad is regarded as the Bible of the Kaula sect of the Śāktas, and its doctrines are held to be the primary authority. In this connection it is pertinent to refer to the two paths of Śaktism—the Vāma mārga or the left hand path and the Dakṣiṇa mārga or the right hand path. The Vāma mārga has not won the approval of Śrī Śankara. In his *Saundaryalaharī* which is a clear exposition of the fundamentals of Śri Vidyā, Śankara has discredited the methods of the Kaula circle.[37] Since Śankara's age, the practices of Dakṣiṇa mārga have been more in vogue, and those of Vāma mārga fallen into disuse. In the Tārakopaniṣad the Praṇava is identified with the Mūlamantra of the Śākta system of worship. A critical study of the Upaniṣads bearing on the Śakti system of worship reveals that they follow rather closely the Purāṇic basis of Śaktism rather than the Vedic. In other words the tenets and principles enunciated are rooted not in Vedic literature but in the Purāṇas. This demonstrates the profound influence of the Purāṇa literature on the ideas and speculations of the age to which the above compositions of the Upaniṣads may be said to belong.

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[37] A recent attempt to describe Vāmācāra is seen in the *Secrets of the Kaula Circle* by Elizabeth Sharpe, Luzac & Co., London.

The above survey then demonstrates beyond doubt that the cult of the mother goddess was certainly known and practised in the Vedic period. In this epoch we have noticed the goddess of Evil, who goes by the name of Nirṛti. There is the fighting goddess Vāk who bends Rudra's bow against heretics. There is the goddess of Wealth Puramdhi. There is the guardian deity Pṛthvī. The deity of freedom is also there like Aditi. Besides these, the wives of Gods like Indra, Varuṇa and Agni are mentioned. In the light of critical examination these different deities are manifestations of various powers of Śakti who have been assigned definite functions. The Vedic bard realised that without the backing up of Śakti, which expression to repeat again, is not of course Vedic, the God who is Śakta cannot be active. And the trait of Motherhood is prominently mentioned wherever these goddesses are referred to in the vast field of Vedic literature.

SECTION 4

In Other Literature

From this class of literature we pass on to another class which may be styled Sūtra literature. Two sūtras of this class have been recently noticed. One is Agastya sūtra whose original expounder seems to be Lopāmudrā, the wife of the sage. The sūtras in this work enunciate the path of bhakti to realise the Devī. This culture is designated Kādi vidyā. The other sūtra is that attributed to Paraśurāma of the glorious Bhārgava line dealing with Kaula mārga. This work is commented on by one Umānandanātha who designates himself a pupil of Bhāskara Rāya. These sūtras viewed from literary point do not seem to be ancient works. The language and style undoubtedly point to a later date, and these compositions have been apparently fathered upon two ancient sages to make them works of acknowledged authority.

But the system of worship which is popularly known as Śrī Vidyā can be traced back to the age of the epics. In the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, Viśvāmitra teaches Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa the knowledge of new weapons and mantras. Of these are the mantras Balā and Atibalā which are said to be the mother of all knowledge (sarva jñānasya mātaram) and as originally taught by the Creator. They are said to be vidyās of superhuman efficacy and remind us of the terminology of the Śaktaic literature and one sees here definite germs of the system of worship of Śrī Vidyā.[38]

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[38] Bāla. 22. 12-20.

CHAPTER IV

THE DURGĀ CULT AND OTHER ASPECTS OF ŚAKTISM

SECTION 1

The Durgā Cult

Mention has been made of a number of cults referred to in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.*[1] Daurga mantras are held to be Vedic mantras higher than Viṣṇu mantras. In point of significance there are other mantras dedicated to other cults which precede the Durgā cult, as for instance Gaṇapati, Sūrya and Śiva. Speaking on the Durgā Cult[2] reference may be made to the Durgā-sūkta in the Āraṇyakas. We find again a proto-type of Durgā[3] in the Uṣas who is said to do battle, and vanquish the demon of darkness, the Rātrī, to whom man prays for safety and security,[4] and in the Vāk who is out to fight the enemies of the Veda. In the light of this fact it is difficult to accept the theory of A. A. Macdonell that the reference to Durgā in the Bṛhaddevatā II, 77, is an interpolation. From the circumstances in which the expression is mentioned in the Bṛhaddevatā, there is no particular reason to reject it as interpolation. In fact it seems almost certain that without it the text in the relevant portion seems to be halting. It would be therefore taken that the term Durgā is already known to the author of the Bṛhaddevatā.

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[1] IV, 38. 4-8.

[2] Reference may be made to two studies on the subject
(*a*) Fausball—Indian Mythology, p. 159 *et. seq*. and
(*b*) B. C. Mazumdar in JRAS 1906, pp. 355-62.

[3] A. C. Das: Ṛg Vedic India, pp. 271 and 429: Ṛg Vedic Culture, p. 466.

[4] Cp. A.V. xix, 47.2.

In the Mahābhārata we have prayers addressed to Durgā in two parvans. In the Virāṭa parvan of the Mahābhārata when the Pāṇḍavas entered the great city of Virāṭa, Yudhiṣṭhira is said to have sent his prayers at this stage to the sacred Goddess Durgā. It is pertinent to ask why at this stage of all gods and goddesses Yudhiṣṭhira called upon Durgā particularly. This is however explained in the course of the hymn. She is Durgā[5] because she rescues people from danger. And at that moment the Pāṇḍavas were leading a life *incognito*. They entered the palace of Virāṭa as Brahmans in guise, and Yudhiṣṭhira naturally had fears about his personal safety. So he invoked the goddess of power who would remove dangers which would occur to her devotees. She is represented in this chapter as the sister of Hari, born of Yaśodā, queen of Nandagopa, and the terror of Kamsa. The story goes[6] that a voice in the welkin told Kamsa that the eighth son born of Devakī would kill him. Kamsa put Devakī and her husband in jail and went on killing their children one after another. On this the Devas waited on Hari who promised to be born to Devakī and Vasudeva to remove the Asuras from the face of the earth. So he called upon his śakti, Viṣṇū Māyā (also Vaiṣṇavī) to be born in the womb of Yaśodā at the time he is to be born to Vasudeva. So when Kṛṣṇa was born, Vasudeva was advised by Him to exchange Him for Yaśodā's just born female child. This Vasudeva effected at once in that stormy night. When the watchmen of Kamsa reported to their king the birth of a daughter, the wicked Kamsa dashed her on a stone when She ascended the air and warned Kamsa that the child that would kill him was already born and that his death was certain at his hands. Then according to the wish of Hari she retired to the Vindhya hills.

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[5] Ch. VIII. 21.

[6] Bhāga, P. X. 2. 11.

Yudhiṣṭhira who is a full-fledged devotee of Hari-Kṛṣṇa could not think of any other than his śakti—the Vaiṣṇavī. It has been generally assumed by scholars that Durgā is the consort of Śiva and Śiva alone. This is a fundamental mistake. Durgā is a common appellation to Devī in general. She may be the consort of Brahmā, Śiva or Viṣṇu or any deity for that matter. Even as Kumārī or Kanyā, that is, in her virginhood, she is Durgā devī. For do we not read in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa[7] that when Balarāma went on a tour of pilgrimage he visited Kanyā who is Durgādevī, who had her shrine south of Malaya. Even now the celebrated shrine of Kanyākumārī at the Cape Comorin attracts many pilgrims. He who knows and realises the philosophic and pragmatic aspect of Śakti cult can alone appreciate the fundamental truth that lies hidden in our religious and Tantric works. Yudhiṣṭhira who knew the secret of Hindu philosophy and religion then addressed Vaiṣṇavī Śakti as Durgā and invoked her blessings. The following is the hymn on Durgā by Yudhiṣṭhira.

नमोस्तु वरदे कृष्णे कुमारि ब्रह्मचारिणि ।
बालार्कसदृशाकारे पूर्णचन्द्रनिभानने ॥
कौमारं व्रतमास्थाय त्रिदिवं पावितं त्वया ।
तेन त्वं स्तूयसे देवि त्रिदशैः पूज्यतेऽपि च ॥
त्रैलोक्यरक्षणार्थाय महिषासुरनाशिनी ।
प्रसन्ना मे सुरश्रेष्ठे दयां कुरु शिवा भव ।
जया त्वं विजया चैव संग्रामे च जयप्रदा ।
ममापि विजयं देहि वरदा त्वं च सांप्रतम् ॥
विन्ध्ये चैव नगश्रेष्ठे तव स्थानं हि शाश्वतम् ।

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[7] Bhāga. P. Bk. X, Ch. 79.

कालि कालि महाकालि शीधुमांसपशुप्रिये ॥
दुर्गात्तारयसे दुर्गे तत्त्वं दुर्गा स्मृता जनैः ।
कान्तारेष्ववसन्नानां मग्नानां च महार्णवे ।
दस्युभिर्वा निरुद्धानां त्वं गतिः परमा नृणाम् ।
जलप्रतरणे चैव कान्तारेष्वटवीषु च ।
ये स्मरन्ति महादेवि न च सीदन्ति ते नराः ।
त्वं कीर्तिः श्रीर्धृतिः सिद्धिर्ह्रीर्विद्या संततिर्मतिः ।
संध्या रात्रिः प्रभा निद्रा ज्योत्स्ना कांतिः क्षमा दया ।
त्राहि मां पद्मपत्राक्षि सत्ये सत्या भवस्व नः ।
शरणं भव मे दुर्गे शरण्ये भक्तवत्सले ॥

Virāṭ P. VIII. 7-26.

In this hymn it is interesting to note some salient points. Durgā is said to be the same as Kṛṣṇā, thus she is the feminine side of Kṛṣṇa's nature. She is said to have four hands and four faces. Among other weapons she holds the noose, bow and discus. She is praised as Kumārī or the perpetual maiden. She is addressed as the Slayer of Mahiṣa, the demon buffalo, as Kālī, Mahākālī, Vindhyāvāsinī. It has been a custom in India to attribute the exploits of one goddess to another. The idea was that the different manifestations are after all for a certain definite purpose, and really there is one Devī who assumes various forms for fulfilling various purposes.[8] Sometimes she assumes a malignant form and sometime a benevolent form. She is black and she is bright. When the Pāṇḍavas sent their prayer thus, it was heard and Durgā presented herself before them and blessed them with victory in the battle that was shortly to take place with the Kauravas, and also with kingdom and prosperity of all kinds. When she disappeared, Yudhiṣṭhira sought audience of the Virāṭa king, and victory attended him in all his subsequent efforts.

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[8] See in this connection Oṭṭakkūttar's hymn on Devī in the *Takkayāgapparaṇi* stanzas 103-119.

There is another hymn that occurs in the Bhīṣma parvan where at the suggestion of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna invoked Durgā on the eve of the Kurukṣetra battle for victory in war. She is said here[8a] in addition to be lord of the Yogins, born of the Kauśika race, and addressed as Umā, Śankarī, Mother of Skanda, Kāla Kartā, Sarasvatī, Sāvitrī, the mother divine of the Vedas, the embodiment of the Vedānta śāstra, and last but not least as the Mother. This hymn again confirms the view which we have expressed more than once that one Supreme Devī shows herself in different forms to fulfil different functions. She is the great Śakti who makes the Supreme Being śakta or powerful.

About these hymns a number of theories, very inconclusive in character, have been put forward. One simple way of disposing them, is to style them as interpolations. The places where the hymns to Durgā occur are really situations so critical that any person would invoke the deity who comes to succour and relieve him from lifelong distress. So it is but natural that Durgā who is believed to be a deity that quickly relieves one from such disasters is rightly and properly invoked. Secondly, the dark colour and her association with Yaśodā and Nandagopa suggest that she was the tribal goddess of the gopas. It has been already said that this association is due to the fact of Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna being devoted votaries of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. In fact the hymn makes it clear that the votaries do not find any difference between Kṛṣṇa and Durgā invoked by them. It is a sort of abhedabuddhi. A question may be asked why they could not invoke the deity of their choice—Kṛṣṇa directly. It is because they know the Puruṣa becomes śakta when he is backed by his counterpart Śakti. She it is that propels the Puruṣa to activity and action. Without her, the Puruṣa becomes inactive Principle. That is why the Vaiṣṇava Śakti was invoked. The black colour is only symbolical of the purpose of manifestation. If it were to vanquish the wicked and the Asuras she is black and if it were to do favour to her devotees, she is of white colour.

[8a] Bhīṣma P. Ch. XXIII.

Another theory is that Kālī is a non-Aryan deity and she is fond of wine and meat. There is no force in this argument because Kālī or Mahākāli[9] is only a manifestation of the Devī in her malignant form; to fulfil certain purposes she has to assume a form of terror and dread. It is difficult to differentiate one cult from the other. Next the address Vindhyāvāsinī and Kāntāravāsinī need not deter us. As Umā or Pārvatī is associated with the Himalayas, the Vaiṣṇavī who is said to be niśācarī is considered to have her residence on the Vindhyas. Anyway Durgā is a mountain goddess. And this fact may be due to the peculiar circumstances in which prehistoric man who lived in hills and jungles propitiated the deity who protected him from dangers and difficulties. We have already referred to the forest tribe Eyinar who invoked her to help them in their cattle-lifting and highway robbery, professions, which, according to their culture, were legitimate and binding on their society. One could offer to the god or goddess what he or she consumed as food. As wild tribes they were addicted to eating meat and drinking wine, and naturally these were offered. As the Lord said, when he met his old classmate Kucela with his offering of fried grains, that he would partake of anything heartily given, the goddess was expected to partake of the bali, wine or meat offered by the devoted votary. The association with the hills shows that the cult of Durgā is primitive and prehistoric. The above arguments again hold good for a manifestation with one face or four faces and four arms or two arms or ten arms. The cult may have started among the primitive tribes. But that it was also a Vedic cult, in the sense that the followers of the Vedic religion practised it, is borne chiefly by the fact that the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* declares, to advert to what has been already said, that Durgā mantras are Vedic mantras and higher in point of religious merit than Viṣṇu mantras. In other words Śaktism is rooted in Vedic literature.

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[9] C. A. Menon's paper in S. K. Ayyangar Comm. Volume.

SECTION 2

Śaktism in Mānavadharmaśāstra

Reference has already been made to the function assigned to Pṛthvī, viz., guardianship of the world. The same idea is expressed by the author of the Mānavadharma śāstra. In enumerating the duties devolved on kings in general, Manu speaks of Pārthivavratam. This consists of looking upon all creatures equally and impartially just as Mother Earth does.[10] Elsewhere Manu prescribes offering of bali to Pṛthvī, and what is still more interesting is that he mentions Pṛthvī with Dyaus as a constant pair Dyāvā Pṛthvī, just like the Vedic expression, another instance of the continuity of ideas and concepts in Ancient India.

SECTION 3

In other Purāṇas

In the Purāṇas we have yet another class of literature which expounds the Śakti cultus in an elaborate manner. We have already examined in extenso the Lalitopākhyānā section of the *Brahmāṇḍa*

[10] यथा सर्वाणि भूतानि धरा धारयते समम् ।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि बिभ्रतः पार्थिवं व्रतम् ॥
IX. 3. 11.

Purāṇa. Other Purāṇas which refer to this cultus are the *Devī Bhāgavatam*, the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, and the *Sūtasamhitā*, a section of the *Skanda Purāṇa.* Several other Purāṇas make a brief reference to one phase or other of the Śakti cult. We shall take up the *Devī Bhāgavatam*. The date and composition of this Purāṇa are a bone of contention among scholars. Some would go to the length of remarking that Śrimad Bhāgavata Purāṇa is a work of Bopadeva, the Bengal grammarian of the 12th century A.D., and that the *Devī Bhāgavatam* is to be classed in the category of the Mahāpurāṇas. On the face of it this cannot stand a critical examination. The reasons cited are unconvincing and in our opinion Śrimad Bhāgavatá is an ancient Purāṇa. We do not propose to discuss this subject here. Let us take it for our present purpose that the *Devī Bhāgavatam* is a Purāṇa apart and contains valuable information regarding different phases of Śaktism.

The first book of the *Devī Bhāgavatam* refers to the praise of the Devī.[11] A number of chapters of the Book III[12] contain hymns on the glory and prowess of the Devī. Particular attention may be drawn to what are known as Ambā yajña and Devī yajña. It is named mānasa yajña in honour of the goddess. By performing in the way it should be done, one gets the vision of the Mahāvidyā leading to mokṣa. It is said that Hari himself performed the Devī yajña at the commencement of creation. The grounds which prompted Hari to take up this sacrifice are expounded in chapter XIII. The same book furnishes information on the installation of Durgā Devī in Benares, and Ayodhyā.[13] This book devotes five chapters to the Navarātri ceremony, popularly known as Dasara which is again celebrated in honour of the great goddess.

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[11] Chh. iv & vii.

[12] Chh. iii to vi and xiv.

[13] Chh. xxiv and xxv.

In Book V we have legends which describe the origin and form of the goddess who was specially created out of all the gods to destroy Asuras and Mahiṣa in particular. She is said to possess 18 hands.[14] What follows is the preparation for war by Mahiṣa, the war and his death. The Devī was hymned and peace was once more established in the world.[15] More details of the worship of the Devī are furnished in chapter XXXIV. The next book (VI) devotes itself to the Mahāmāyā form of the Devī. Here Hari is said to declare that not He, nor Śiva nor Brahmā could measure the depth of the power of Māyā and Her three guṇas. The world is deluded by her powers which consist of creation, preservation and destruction. One should therefore meditate on the Bhagavatī on whom the Māyā is dependent, and who is of the nature of pure existence and bliss[16]. Yet another manifestation of the Devī Satākṣi is described for the purpose of killing the Asura Durgama.[17] A later chapter gives an account of the Virāṭ rūpa of the Devī or Her wonderful cosmic form. Here the Devī is made to speak on the importance of jñāna as leading to final release from samsāra. The last three chapters of this book are devoted to an enumeration of places sacred to Devī and the mode of worship to be offered.[18]

The *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* contains chapters on Śaktism and mentions manifestations of Devī as we hve pointed out, such as Sarasvatī Devī, Durgā and Mahālakṣmī. By far the most important cultus of this Purāṇa is that of Rādhā. Both books contain several chapters on Rādhā and her relation with Kṛṣṇa.[19] Both are said to attain goloka.[20] Two chapters of the Purāṇa are devoted to the hymning of Kālī and Bhadrakālī. They represent the fierce aspect of the Devī.[21] The worship of these deities is still current throughout Malabar and the West coast in general. We can recall the reference in the Mahābhārata to Kālī, Mahākālī and Bhadrakālī as surnames of Durgā. No distinction is made as to the use of these epithets to Devī.

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[14] Ch. viii.

[15] Chh. ix to xx.

[16] Chh xxx and xxxi.

[17] Bk. VII, Ch. 28.

[18] See also Book VIII, Ch. 24.

There is also the mention of Devī as Tārā which may point to the influence of Buddhism on the cultus.[22]

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* which is roughly dated in the fourth century A.D. contains a whole section entitled the *Devīmāhātmya*. Pargiter who has translated this remarks that it is a later interpolation and 'the product of a later age which developed and took pleasure in the sanguinary features of popular religion.' Pargiter is apparently ignorant of the fact that such sanguinary features can be taken to a remote antiquity, as early as pre-Vedic Age. The hymns in honour of the goddess breathe of a lofty religious fervour and spiritual meditation. Gross revelry and repulsive acts are marked features of the battles described, and this has evoked the remark that the *Devīmāhātmya* is 'a compound of the most opposite characters.' It looks at first sight as if we have contradictory descriptions. Those who know the circumstances under which the Devī is requested to offer battle show that unless recourse could be had to such repulsive practices, the enemy could not be curbed and completely crushed. If the enemy would in-

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19. Bk. I, ch. 5, 48, 55; Bk. II, 52, 57; 67-68; 110-111; etc.

20. *Ibid.*, Chh. 128-129.

21. Bk. II. Chh. 36-37.

22. Bk. I, 58 and Bk. II, 86.

dulge in adharmic modes of warfare, surely he must be paid in his coin. This is what the Purāṇa narrates. A Devī who achieved so much against odds should be praised with all fervour by a devotee who seeks peace. Hence the elevated fervour of the hymns addressed to the goddess. The terrible aspect of the Devī is depicted. She is addressed as Mahāmāyā, Bhadrakālī, Mahākālī and Caṇḍikā. Kālī and others are an emanation from Durgā. These observations are enough to prove that the *Devīmāhātmya* need not stand apart from the Purāṇa and even if the date of the Purāṇa as the fourth century A.D. be admitted, there is nothing wrong in that. An account of the *Devīmāhātmya* as it occurs in the Purāṇa quite fits in with the framework of the Purāṇic structure. This section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* gives us a glimpse of the condition of the Śakti cult at least in the early centuries of the Christian era. This portion of the Purāṇa may be of the same age as the epic Mahābhārata, where similar descriptions and names of Durgā occur.

The Sūta Samhitā to which we made a reference as a section of the *Skanda Purāṇa* could not have been composed later than the sixth century A.D. For M M Haraprasad Sastri found in Nepal Library a copy of the Skāndam written in the later Gupta characters. In many places there are references to the worship of the Devī and details connected with it. There is here a *Devīmāhātmya* which furnishes an account of the engagements, and victories of the Devī, depicted both in her terrible and gracious form. In fact the Yajñavaibhava khaṇḍa of the Sūta Samhitā begins with the philosophical disquisition of the *āśraya* of śakti on the Supreme Being with the attributes of Ēkā, Paramā Śakti, Māyā Durghatakāriṇī and Ānandarūpā of Śiva.[23] She is further designated mātṛkā and mantramāta.[24] And this mātṛkā is of three forms—sthūla, sūkṣma and susūkṣma[25]. The inseparability of Śakti from the jīva, call this what you will, Śiva, Rudra, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Virāṭ, Hiraṇyagarbha, Svarāṭ, Samrāṭ, Indra or any lokapāla, deva or manuṣya, bird or beast, plants, rivers or mountains, etc., is prominent. It is concluded that he who sees the identity of Umāśankara (Śivaśakti) alone sees. He is the person who has realised the truth to whatever sect he belongs, Śaiva, Bhāgavata, Jaina, Bauddha or Apabhramśa.[26] The thread of the discussion is continued to show that one Śiva manifests himself in five ways, with respective śaktis—Sadyojāta and Sarjanaśakti, Vāma deva and Pālana śakti, Aghora and Samharaṇaśakti, Tatpuruṣa and Tirobhāva śakti, and Īśāna and Anugrahaśakti.[27] Some light is thrown on the nature and locus of some of the śaktis. The Sūtagītā portion of the Sūta Samhitā explains what citśakti, māyāśakti, parāśakti and bindumayīśakti are and what place they occupy in the Individual Soul called Brahman. Citśakti is to be located in the middle part of the body called Mūlādhāra. Māyāśakti is stationed at the frontal end of the face. Parāśakti is in the form of nāda and takes a place in the middle portion of the face, while Śakti in the form of *bindu* has the intervening part of the brows for its station. The places assigned for the Śaktis of Trimūrtis are as follows: Sarasvatī on the tip of the tongue, Mahālakṣmī in the heart-centre and Pārvatī with Rudra.[28] The fundamental idea underlying this concept is that every part of the Individual Soul is made to act and to will by the aid of a certain śakti which is personified Energy. One point to be noted before we close this section, is that the Purāṇa is well acquainted with the Tantric works like the Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava Āgamas as well as those of Avaidic sects like the Jain and Buddhist. This is proof positive of the ancientness of some of the Āgamic works.

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[23] II, 6-7, 42; VIII, 3; XIII whole.

[24] IV. 10-11.

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[25] *Ibid.*, 31-32.

[26] XIII, 2-39.

[27] XIV, 2-5.

[28] VII, 17-23.

CHAPTER V

ŚAKTISM AND THE TANTRA TREATISES

Any survey of Śaktaic literature will not be complete if a word is not said about the vast field of Tantra literature which primarily deals with the worship of Devī as Śakti. There has been a keen controversy as to the age of the composition of these Tantra treatises, and it has been generally understood that they were composed after the fourth century A.D. The Tantras are not one or two but are several in number. True, many Tantras were written after the fourth century. But the question is whether there were any Āgama treatises before this date. Be it understood what southerners call Āgamas, the north Indians designate Tantras—all connected with the worship of one divinity or other. With the growing popularity of the Śākta cult, there was a demand for more literature on the subject, and hence a number of mediaeval and modern treatises. Most of these have not evoked the authority and weight of the earlier treatises on Tantra. But it may be definitely said that the Tantra ritual is only a development of the ritual section of the Veda which goes by the name of Karmakāṇḍa. The first landmark in the history of Tantra literature may be said to begin with Śri Śankarācārya whose age is fixed to be eighth century A.D. In his much celebrated work entitled Saundaryalaharī, Śri Śankara refers to the Tantras as sixty-four in number.[1] Śankara simply makes a statement of fact. But Lakṣmīdhara, one of the commentators on this fine piece of work has a gloss where he furnishes the names of these sixty-four works as mentioned in *Catuśśati*, itself a work of Tantric character.

The following are the names of these treatises: Mahāmāyāśambaram, Yoginījālaśambaram, Tatvaśambarakam, the eight

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[1] Śloka 31. Catuh ṣaṣṭhyā tantraih.

Bhairava Tantras (Siddhabhairava, Vaṭukabhairava, Kankālabhairava, Kālabhairava, Kālāgnibhairava, Yoginībhairava, Mahābhairava and Śaktibhairava), Bahurūpāṣṭakam (being the Tantras sacred to Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Māhendrī, Cāmuṇḍā and Śivadūtī), Yamalāṣṭakam, Candrajñānam, Mālinīvidyā, Mahāsammohanam, Vāmajuṣṭam, Mahādevam, Vātulam, Vātulottaram, Hṛdbhedam, Tantrabhedam, Guhyatantram, Kāmikam, Kalāvādam, Kalāsāram, Kuūṇḍikāmatam, Matottaram, Vīṇākhyam, Trottalam, Trottalottaram, Pāñcāmṛtam, Rūpabhedam, Bhūtoḍḍāmaram, Kulasāram, Kuloḍḍīśam, Kulacūḍāmaṇi; Sarvajñānottaram, Mahākālīmatam, Aruṇeśam Medinīśam, Vikuṇṭheśvaram, Pūrvm Paścimam Dakṣam, Uttaram, Niruttaram, Vimalam, Vimalottaram and Devīmatam (pp. 80-84).

According to Śankara the authorship of these works is attributed to Lord Śiva, and these works were more misleading than dispelling darkness and throwing a flood of light. In other words these manuals were intended for persons in the lower levels of culture who could not discipline their minds either to a life of self-denial or practice of yoga. In order to get the full benefit of the teachings contained in these manuals insistence is made on the initiation by a guru when the śiṣya is in a fit stage to enter on such secret but pure and refined path of worship.

Though Śankara spoke of 64 Tantras, there have been many more, and there has been a different version and a different number according to the sects which began to adopt them as authoritative works. For example, one division of these Āgamas speaks of 28 works: Kāmika, Yogaja, Cintya, Karaṇa, Ajita, Dīpta, Sūkṣma, Sāhasraka, Amśumān, Suprabheda, Vijaya, Niśvāsa, Svayambhuva, Āgneyaka, Vīra, Raurava, Mākuṭa, Vimala, Candrajñāna, Mukhabimba, Prodgīta, Lalita, Siddha, Santāna, Sarvokta, Parameśvara, Kiraṇa and Vātula. Besides, as many as 207 subsidiary Āgamas are also distinguished.[2] These are all Śaiva Āgamas which are a repository of the Siddhānta philosophy which is elaborated so much in South Indian Tamil literature. The story goes that the celebrated sons of Brahmā—Sanaka, Sananda, Sanātana, and Sanatkumāra—waited upon Śiva and told Him of the vastness and intricacy of Vedic literature, requested for a simpler literature which would command as much importance and value as the Vedas. It is said that Śiva taught them some secret doctrines which were expounded by them for the welfare of the world. Thus the Āgamas attributed to these four seers Sanaka, Sananda, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra, became authoritative works, free from obscene and other practices that find mention in some of the later spurious works. This is why Tamil saints from the time of Tirumūlar, the author of *Tirumantiram*—a composition of the early centuries of the Christian era—to Nīlakaṇṭha Śivācārya have made no distinction between the Vedas and Āgamas in their works. This is why again Sanskritists like Appayya Dīkṣita and Haradatta Śivācārya have attached much authority to these works of acknowledged value. Appropriately to this view Lakṣmīdhara who flourished in the reigns of Gajapati Vīra Rudra and Pratāpa Rudra (in the 12th century), and who has been already mentioned as a commentator on the Saundaryalaharī, states five authorities whose Samhitās or manuals have been handed down to posterity and holds the view that these keep truly to the spirit of the Vedas. These are collectively known as Śubhāgama Pañcakam.[3] The names mentioned are Vasiṣṭha, Sanaka, Śuka, Sanandana and Sanatkumāra. There is an agreement with the Tamil tradition with regard to three names. Lakṣmīdhara introduces Śuka and adds the name of Vasiṣṭha. He enriches his gloss on the Saundaryalaharī quoting extensively from these works.

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[2] Sabaratna Mudaliar: Essentials of Hinduism, 1913; p. 228.

Before we close this discussion it is better to say something about the so-called heretical Tantras. From his list of the sixty-four

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[3] Saundaryalaharī, pp. 85-6.

Tantras, Lakṣmīdhara is careful to omit a number of Śaktaic Tantras such as Kulārṇava Tantrarāja, Tantraratnākara, Saubhāgyakalpalatikā and Kaulādarśa. These works, it may be noted in passing, are treatises of the well-known Kaula school. Apparently Lakṣmīdhara had a bias against this school and its adherents. Even among the manuals mentioned by him, he calls several as works whose authorship is attributed to the followers of Jaina, Bauddha, Digambara, Kāpālika and other sects which Indian tradition has unanimously regarded as *avaidic* in character.

That such Āgama works were in existence when the *Skanda Purāṇa* was reduced to writing is evident. For do we not read in the Sūta Samhitā the existence of the following Āgamas; Śaivāgamas, Vaiṣṇavāgamas, Brahmāgamas, Buddhāgamas, Jaināgamas, Āgamas sacred to Yakṣas, Gandharvas and lastly to Devī.[4] Thus we see that at least before the sixth century in Nepal there were Āgamas followed by different sects in the country.

An examination of the Buddhist Āgamas shows that they were composed in an age when Buddhism began to decline. Speaking of the language and style, Professor Macdonell says that they are written in barbarous Sanskrit. Here is an exposition of Yoga which is 'a mixture of mysticism, sorcery and erotics, accompanied by disgusting orgies.' Curiously these Tantra treatises have no background in the religion and philosophy of the Buddhists. One sees the profound influence of Śaiva Tantras on these Buddhist manuals. For it is the worship of Linga, a symbol of Śiva, and of other Śaiva gods that is largely promulgated in these treatises. Even female divinities are invoked, an idea quite alien to orthodox Buddhism. This was the period of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Hīnayāna giving place to this developed system early in the first centuries of the Christian era. The productions of the Mahāyāna sect were all in Sanskrit, and the doctrines inculcated were therefore taken from the then current religious practices of the land. At that time the predominating religious sect was Śaiva and hence the Śaiva influence in Mahāyāna works in general and Buddhist Tantras in particular.[5] Though the mediaeval and modern treatises on Tantra do not fall very much within the scope of our discussion, still mention must be made of the very valuable work done by Arthur Avalon in this field. This learned author has taken much pains to see and understand things through the Indian eye and has therefore been able to present the translation and interpretation of many a *tantra* in their true perspective.[6]

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[4] Brahmagītā, 4. 68-72.

One such presentment which may be fairly said to be a representative of the mediaeval Tantras is the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra. The book opens with a question by Devī to Śiva as to the easy means of the liberation of beings, and is answered that the Tantra is the easiest means of release. For here we find the quintessence of the Veda in acquiring knowledge of the Brahman or the universal soul. An account of Brahmamantra, initiation into it, the elements of worship, *homa*, and hymn of praise are all narrated in five chapters. The Tantra then becomes a bit of Dharmaśāstra and postulates the varṇāśrama dharma, samskāras, expiatory rites and the true nature of dharma. There is a chapter on image worship and dedication of temples. But what is important is the philosophy underlying this cultus. There is Brahmasādhana, and Śaktisādhana. The object of worship in both is the same. Brahman stands for Turīya Brahman united with Mūlaprakṛti, and Śakti is Mūlaprakṛti united with Turīya Brahman. Therefore there is a non-separate relation between Brahman and Śakti. In other words there can exist no Brahman without Śakti and no Śakti without Brahman. The result obtained by Brahmasādhana is the same as that by Śaktisādhana.[7]

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[5] See Macdonell: India's Past, p. 64.

[6] Some of the works edited by Arthur Avalon with introduction in English and with translation are Ṣaṭcakraṇirūpana which is a treatise on Kuṇḍaliniyoga, Prapañcasāra Tantra, Kulacuḍāmaṇi Nigama, Kulārṇva Tantra, Kālivilāsa, Tantrarāja, Kāmakalāvilāsa, Mahānirvāna Tantra and others. Among other works of the same author, mention may be made of (1) *Shakti* and *Shakta* which contains a popular exposition of the doctrine and ritual of the Śākta Tantras, (2) Garland of Letters dealing with *śabda* or 'sound' and the technique of *mantras;* and (3) the World as Power. This last work is a critical study of Power as Reality, Power as Matter; Power as Life, Power as Mind, Power as Consciousness; while his Serpent Power deals with Yoga in relation to Tantra.

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[7] See Mahānirvāṇa Tantra (Trans.), pp. 64-5 *n* 8.

CHAPTER VI

THE PHILOSOPHIC BASIS OF THE CULT

In the Chapter XXXIX of the Lalitopākhyāna in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,* there occurs a hymn of god Brahmā to the Supreme Goddess. Wonderful in itself, it gives us a clear clue to the philosophy of Śaktism. The hymn is to the goddess Ādi Lakṣmī[1] *alias* Kāmākṣī, who is stated to be the mother of Trimūrtis. She is described as having a glorious form of light and as shining in the hearts of all. She is called Jaganmātā (Mother of the Universe) and Tripurasundarī and Sarvamangalā. The hymn says that she creates and preserves and destroys the Universe, that she cannot be known by Vedas and Āgamas but is known only by herself and to herself (Svasamvedya); that the sages call her as Parabrahman and she is meditated upon by Brahmā and Viṣṇu and Rudra and Īśvara and Sadāśiva as well as by Indra and other deities. Then follows a remarkable verse which says: "I bow to the Devī whose breath is the Veda, whose glance is the five elements, and whose smile takes form as the manifested universe." She is the Jñānaśakti and at her command the sun and the moon light the earth and the fire burns brightly. The twenty-five *tattvas* and the five *māyākañcukas* are but her manifestations. She is the immanent soul of all souls. She is Bliss infinite and eternal and supreme. She is called Śrīvidyā.

What is this Śrīvidyā? What are the vital aspects of the theory and practice in Śākta philosophy and religion? As has been said in the last chapter, the Tantras which expound these recondite truths have now been made known to some extent by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), by his many works expounding the principles and practices of Śaktism. But for his blazing the trail, little would be known today about such principles and practices.

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[1] Br. P. IV. 40-46.

Śaktism is dynamic Hinduism. It is Hinduism in its mood of synthesis and reconciliation. From the *Purāṇic* point of view, Devī is the sister of Viṣṇu (Harisahodarī) and the wife of Śiva (Kapāliprāṇanāyikā) and the mother of Gaṇeśa and Subrahmaṇya Thus she is the centre of the supreme group of deities. From the *Darśana* point of view, the *avikārapariṇāma vāda*[2] of Śaktism is bound to reconcile the interminable and resounding conflicts of *ārambha vāda* (Creation), and *pariṇāma vāda* (Evolution) and *vivarta vāda* (Apparent Evolution). From the cosmogenic point of view, Śaktism amplifies and supplements the *Sāmkhya* doctrine[3] and relates the godless universe of Kapila to God once more. From the point of view of religious *sādhana,* the Devī who is the giver of the intuitive knowledge of God (Śivajñānapradāyinī) is herself the supreme Sādhana as shown in the Kenopaniṣad.[4]

The special excellence of Śaktism lies in its emphasis on *sādhana.* There can be no *siddhi* without *sādhana.* To know a thing in its fulness we must be it. To know Brahman we must be Brahman. To become Brahman we must know it. The excellence of Śaktism lies in its affirmation of Śakti as consciousness and of the identity of Śakti and Brahman. In short Brahman is static Śakti and Śakti is dynamic Brahman. The Tantras give us *mantras* and rituals and yogic *sādhanas* which supplement the Vedic *sādhanas*, produce the highest results quickly and with ease, and above all they are open to all castes and both sexes. The great glory of Śaktism is its affirmation that each of us has a latent and potent magazine of śakti (power). Such power is the power of joy and the power of love and the power of service and the power of renunciation. In common with all schools of Hinduism Śaktism also inculcates a healthy physical and moral life. Let there be no hesitation about affirming this basic fact. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad[5] clearly proclaims that he who has not refrained from evil acts and who has no peace of mind and self-control cannot attain God by any means.

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[2] For a fuller explanation of this principle see Śrī Varivasyā Rahasyam, verse (3).

स जयति महान्प्रकाशो यस्मिन्दृष्टे न दृश्यते किमपि ।
कथमिव तस्मिन्जाते सर्वं विज्ञातमुच्यते वेदे ॥

and the gloss on this by Brahmasri N. Subrahmanya Aiyar in Tamil (Brahmavīdya Vimarśanī Sabha publication series, 3). The first part of the verse relates to the *vivarta vāda,* and the succeeding part to *avikārapariṇāmavāda.* The essence of the doctrine is that though the world is a product of Brahman, Brahman itself does not suffer change like that of milk and curds or clay and pot etc.

[3] According to the Śānkhya philosophy (a) the Puruṣa and Prakṛti are different. In the Śākta system Śakti and Śakta form one whole. (b) The Sānkhyas are content with Jaḍaśakti but Śāktas believe in Citśākti also. (c) The Śākta Tatvas are fuller than the Sānkhya ones (36 as against 24; Ṣaḍvimśa tatvāni viśvam). See also Śrīvidya Saparya Vāsana ed. by N. Subramani Aiyar (Brahmavidya Vimarśani Sabha Series 5) p. 27.

[4] iv. 7 & 8.

A question may be asked: What about the Vāmamārga of Śaktism ? There is much misunderstanding about it even to-day. The Vāmamārga with its reference to the five *makāras* is applicable only to such communities as have not refrained from flesh and wine. The Agastya Śūtras[6] make this clear beyond doubt. The five *makāras* are madya (wine), matsya (fish), māmsa (flesh), maithuna (sexual union) and mudrā (mystic gesture). It is unfortunate that some *sādhakas* (worshippers) resorted to the Vāmamārga for indulging in forbidden foods and drinks and forbidden sex contacts. Vāmamārga is an extremist application of the doctrines and practices of Śaktism. The worship of the naked woman —which is said to obtain in some places—was but to divinise our view of sex and to take away sex-mindedness. But very often in this imperfect world the way to hell is paved with good intentions. Further the esoteric aspect of the five *makāras*[6a] has been forgotten. Wine (madya) is the nectar flowing from the cit-candra-maṇḍala in Yoga. Māmsa (flesh-eating) is the control of the appetite by feeding on oneself by fasting. The matsya (fish) and mudra are the Iḍā and Pingala nāḍis. Maithuna is the joy of the union of the Soul and the Oversoul.

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[5] नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।
नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥
Dvitīyā Vailī, 24.

The Kaṭha Upanishad by J. N. Rawson, 1934.

[6] Ch. IV. 66-66: from a ms. copy in possession of Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri. The total number of sūtras is 300.

There are some Eastern and Western savants who glibly assert that Śaktism is an invasion of Aryanism by non-Aryanism, and there are others who say that the Mother cult is pre-Aryan and originally belonged to the Sumerian or other culture and later on entered Aryanism. The worship of the Mother aspect of God is as deeprooted in human nature as the worship of the Father aspect of Godhead, and it is scarcely necessary to postulate a borrowing of the cult by one culture from another. However that may be, Śaktism according to the *Tantras* is an integral portion of Hinduism and is a living and vital body of tenet and practice in India to-day. Sir John Woodroffe says with force and appositeness: "Let it be as you will with regard to the origin of the Śākta Āgama; but at present Śākta worship is an integral part of the general Hinduism and as such admits the authority of Veda, accepting, as later explained, every other belief held by the general body of the Hindu people."[6b]

[6a] See the foreword to the translation of Saundaryalahari, by G. V. Ganesa Aiyar (Kumbakonam); see also Intrn. to Sri Vidya Saparya Vāsana, p. 12.

[6b] Shakti and Shakta, (II edition) pp. 32-33. Ganesh & Co., Madras. 1920.

The main sources of Śaktism are the *Tantras*. But the original source is the Veda itself. The Devī Sūkta in the Ṛg Veda[6c] (the Ṛiṣi of which was a woman) and the Śri Sūkta and Bhū Sūkta and Nīla Sūkta and Durgā Sūkta tell us about the cardinal truths of the Śākta faith. The *Kena Upaniṣad* contains a story[7] that once upon a time the Devas conquered the Asuras (Demons) and became proud of their victory and boasted about it; that thereupon a mysterious power (Yakṣa) appeared before them; that the gods sent God Agni to him; that when the Yakṣa asked Agni what he could do Agni said that he would burn everything; that when the Yakṣa asked God Agni to burn a blade of grass, Agni could not do so and retired crestfallen; that the same fate overtook God Vāyu also; that the gods then sent their king Indra, to interrogate the Yakṣa; that when Indra approached, the Yakṣa disappeared; that there appeared then Goddess Umā in all her transcendental glory and taught Indra that the Yakṣa was Brahman (the Supreme Godhead) and that thus Indra was the first knower of Brahman. Thus Śakti is described in the *Kenopanisad* as Brahmavidyā.[8]

[6c] X. 125.

[7] See above pp. 52-3.

ब्रह्मह देवभ्यो विजिग्ये । तस्य ह ब्रह्मणोविजये देवा अमहीयन्त ।
त ऐक्षन्तास्माकमेवायं विजयोऽस्माकमेवायं महिमा इति ॥

III. 1.

तद्धैषां विजज्ञौ । तेभ्यो ह प्रादुर्वभूव । तन्नव्यजानत किमिदं यक्षम्-इति । ते ऽग्निमब्रुवन्-जातवेद एतद्विजानीहि किमेतद्यक्षम् - इति ।

Ibid., 2-3.

तथेति तदभ्यद्रवत् । तमभ्यवदत् - कोऽसि - इति । अग्निर्वा अहमस्मि - इत्यब्रवीत् । जातवेदा अहमस्मि इति ॥

Ibid., 4.

तस्मिंस्त्वयि किंबीर्यम् - इति अपीदम् सर्वं दहेयं यदिदम् पृथिव्याम् - इति ॥

Ibid., 5.

तस्मै तृणं निदधौ । एतद्दह - इति । तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन । तन्नशशाक दग्धुम् । स तत एव निववृते । नैतदशकं विज्ञातुं यदेतद्यक्षं-इति ॥

Ibid., 6.

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानामुमाम् हैमवतीम्। तां होवाच किमेतद्यक्षम् - इति ॥

Ibid., 12.

सा - ब्रह्म - इति होवाच । ब्रह्मणोवा एतद्विजये महीयध्वम् - इति । ततो हैव विदांचकार ब्रह्म - इति ॥

iv. 1.

Mention has already been made of the specific Śākta Upaniṣads.[9] We may refer again to the Tripuratāpinī Upaniṣad which teaches us the now unknown fourth *pāda* of Gāyatrī (*paro rajase sāvadom*).[10] The same Upaniṣad also declares the identity of the Gāyatrī mantra and the Pañcadaśi mantra.[11] It eventually leads up to the knowledge of the Impersonal Brahman. The Bahvṛcopaniṣad mentions the four famous Mahāvākyas.[12] The Bhāvanopaniṣad describes the macrocosm and the microcosm of the Śrī Cakra and tells us also what the *pāśa* and the *ankuśa* (the rope and the goad) and the Ikṣudaṇḍa and the Pañcabāṇa (the sugarcane bow and the five arrow flowers) in the hands of Devī signify[13]. The other Upaniṣads tell us the truths about the Devī in her threefold aspects of Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī and Durgā and explain the glory of Sītā Devī.[14]

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[8] iv. 7. (Poona ed.)

[9] See above Ch. III, Sec. iii, The Śāktā Upaniṣads ed. A. Mahadeva Sastri, Adyar, (1925).

[10] I. 2.

[11] *Ibid.*, 23-26.

[12] प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म, तत्वमसि, अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि।

[13] The whole of Upaniṣad (2).

[14] Among the Śāktā Upaniṣads are Sarasvatī Rahasya Upaniṣad, Sītā Saubhāgya Lakṣmī Upaniṣad, and Sītā Upaniṣad.

Though the worship of the Devī, as already indicated, is amplified in the Itihāsas like the Mahābhārata and in the Purāṇas, still the most extensive exposition is in the *Tantras* and the *Āgamas*. The word *Tantra* signifies amplitude and protective power. The *Kāmika Āgama*[15] says

> *Tanoti vipulām arthān tattvamantra samanvitān* |
> *Trāṇamca kurute yasmāt tantram ityabhidhīyate* ||

It is called *Tantra* because it gives us extensive knowledge relating to *tattvas* and *mantras*, and because it gives us salvation. The special feature about the *Āgamas* and *Tantras* is that they are open to persons of all castes and both sexes and are not subject to the restrictions of the Vaidikācāra. The *Āgamas* fall into three main groups, *viz.*, Śākta Āgama wherein Śakti is worshipped, Śaivāgāma where Śiva is worshipped, and Vaiṣṇavāgama wherein Viṣṇu is worshipped. But we must not forget their basic unity despite their apparent diversity. The concepts of Ardhanārīśvara and Śankaranārāyaṇa should not be forgotten, though the diversity of the Agāmas is due to the diversity of the Iṣṭa Devatas. The special characteristics of the Tantras are stated to be mantra, yantra, nyāsa, dīkṣā, guru and the like.[16]

Let us not accept for a moment the facile theory that the Vedas and the Āgamas conflict with one another. They conflict, if at all, in the same sense as that in which Śruti and Smṛti conflict or as that in which they and the Purāṇas conflict. It is our duty to realise that all of them speak with one voice, because how can the revealed word destroy itself by contradictions? And if we make bold to challenge the inspiration of the one, the same arguments will demolish the inspired character of the other *pramāṇas* as well. Of course the Veda is supreme and eternal and if anything conflicts with it, it must be explained away or given up. Nothing turns upon the distinction of the eternal character of the Veda and the fact that the other *pramāṇas* or revelations were given out at different times, because these having been inspired by God there could be no defect therein. Veda is the World as Idea in the cosmic mind of the Creator, and Tantra is an amplification of the Vedas. This is the orthodox standpoint.

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[15] Shakti and Shakta, p. 18.

[16] See the closing chapters of the Lalitopākhyāna of the Brahmāṇḍa Purāna, Chh. 37-40.

Of course we do find many sects of Śaktism just as we find many sects of Vedāntism. The Vedānta Sūtras themselves have been diversely interpreted. Even so there would be and there are some divergences of doctrine between Śaktism and Vedāntism. But all the same there is a large body of doctrines and practices common to all the sects and schools while there are also divergent doctrines and practices specially obtaining in particular sects and schools. Such tolerant divergence will solidify the main body of Hinduism which today is in a disintegrated condition. The following opinion of Sir John Woodroffe[17] should be pondered over deeply and well: "All systems of interpretation have some merits as they have defects, that of Śankara included. The latter by his Māyāvāda is able to preserve more completely than any other interpretation the changelessness and stainlessness of Brahman. It does this, however at the cost of certain defects, which do not exist in other schools which have also their own peculiar merits and shortcomings. The basis and seat of authority is Śruti or experience, and the Āgama interprets Śruti in its own way. Thus the Śaiva-Śākta doctrines are specific interpretations of the Vedānta and differ in several respects from that of Śankara, though as they agree (I speak of the Northern Śaiva school) with him on the fundamental question of the unity of Jivātmā and Paramātmā; they are therefore Advaita. *Āgama then is one interpretation of Vedānta;* an interpretation doubtless influenced by the *practical* ends which this Śāstra has in view." It is concluded that the Śākta Tantra is the Sādhana Śāstra of Advaita.

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[17] Shakti and Shakta. p. 27.

Let us therefore clearly remember the unity of the Vedas and the Āgamas and assert that Śaktism is one aspect of Vedāntism. It can be claimed that Śāktism is thoroughly Vedic and is the point of reconciliation of all the sects and schools of Hinduism. Kullūka Bhaṭṭa says in his commentary on Manu[18] that Śruti is of two kinds, *viz.*, *Vaidika* and *Tāntrika*. The great Śrikaṇṭha in his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* expressly states[19] that he sees no difference between the Vedas and the Āgamas and that these are really one. And Śankara says in his bhāṣya[20] on Triśatī that Devī is the Brahmavidyā in the form of the Mahāvākyas (Tattvamasi, etc.). The Kulārṇava Tantra says that Kaula Dharma is based on the Veda (*Tasmāt Vedātmakam Śāstram Viddhi kaulātmakam priye*) and the Ṣaṭdarśanas are limbs of the Kaula doctrine.[21] The Prapañcasāra of Śankara refers to the *vaidika* Mahāvākyas.[22] The Niruttara Tantra calls the Tantra the fifth Veda.[23] The Mahārudra Yāmala goes so far as to say that he who is devoid of vaidikācāra is disqualified for Śaktism.[24] In the Mahānirvāna Tantra the mantra *Om Saccidānandam Brahma* is revealed.[25]

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[18] II.1.

[19] Śrutiśca dvividhā vaidikī tāntrikī ca.

वयं तु वेदशिवागमयोर्भेदं न पश्यामः

Ch. II. ii.8.

[20] Collected Works of Śankara, Vani Vilas ed., Vol. XVIII, pp. 285-6.

[21] Shakti and Shakta, p. 45.

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] *Ibid*.

[25] II. vv. 34-36, Tantric Texts, Vol. XIII.

In the light of these texts need we doubt for a moment that Śaktism is thoroughly Vedic in its character. It affirms that the Tantras are the special Veda for the Kali Yuga. It accepts the Advaita doctrine and affirms the fundamental unity of the Jīvātmā (individual soul) and the Paramātmā (Śiva-Śakti). It further affirms the doctrines of Karma and of transmigration. It accepts the Samskāras and Ācāras and the diverse yoga. It still further affirms mokṣa as the supreme goal of life.

An endeavour will be made here only to explain Śaktism and to present the manifestation of Śakti in the macrocosm and in the microcosm. God is above name and form and hence above sex as well. But in the Saguṇa aspect, God can be realised as Father or as Mother. God is spoken of as Śiva-Śakti (Consciousness and its Power). The Saundaryalaharī of Śri Śankara says in its opening verse[26] that Śiva when united to Śakti permeates and sustains the Universe but cannot have an iota of activity when dissociated from Śakti.

This is the basic and fundamental tenet in Śaktism. The Śiva-Śakti in its dynamism becomes Māyā Śakti and makes the Nirguṇa aspect of God shine forth as the Saguṇa aspect. It becomes also Prakṛti Tattva which is composed of the three Guṇas (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas) and whose function is to *finitise* the infinite consciousness, and manifest the latter as the universe of Matter and the universe of Jivas endowed with life and mind—which are Aparā Prakṛti and Parā Prakṛti, to use the language of the Bhagavat Gītā.[27]

It is here that we find another aspect of the reconciliation of all other aspects of Hinduism in Śaktism. The Advaita stresses

[26] शिवः शक्त्या युक्तो यदि भवति शक्तः प्रभवितुं
न चेदेवं देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि ।
अतस्त्वामाराध्यां हरिहरविरिञ्चादिभिरपि
प्रणन्तुं स्तोतुं वा कथमकृतपुण्यः प्रभवति ॥

[27] Ch. VII. 4-5.

unity; the Viśiṣṭādvaita stresses triplicity in unity; the Dvaita stresses multiplicity. The Advaita stress on unity leads it to call the world Mithyā. No doubt Mithyā does not mean unreality or illusion or non-existence. It means only relative and phenomenal existence. But all the same the lack of the link of Śakti between Brahman and the universe has led to the charge of the unreality of universe as being the Advaita doctrine. Nay, it has led also to some schools of Advaita negating the reality of the universe altogether, though Śrī Śankara definitely declares that the universe has a relative or phenomenal reality (vyāvahārika sattā).[28] The schools laying down triplicity and multiplicity have gone far away from the supreme doctrine of unity which was the greatest title of Indian thought to claim world-homage, because the doctrine of devotion is shared by Hinduism with other religions; but the doctrine of *soham* (which in Śaktism becomes *saham*)[29] has no counterpart outside India.

The difference between the Śākta attitude towards the universe and the prevalent pessimistic Hindu attitude is striking. Quite naturally two strains run through human thought—the optimistic strain based on the sense of eternity and joy and the pessimistic strain based on the sense of evanescence and pain and grief. There are passages[30] saying that the world is born in joy and lives in joy and becomes an involute in joy. There are other passages[31] which emphasise that it is impermanent (anitya) and joyless (asukha). Further, one view is that the universe is gross and lifeless matter. Another view subtilises the universe. Yet another view explains away the universe as a mere appearance or a mere illusion. According to the Śākta doctrine we must take our stand on a more fundamental truth, though the above said aspects are by no means false but are relatively true. Śakti is Cidrūpiṇī and Ānandarūpiṇī (pure blissful consciousness). Nature, *i.e.,* the material universe, is but her play (*līlā*) and her manifestation. From this idea follows the idea of the real and joyful character of the universe, which we can enjoy but are unable to enjoy because of the desire-element in our mind which weaves for us the net of pain and grief. A desireless devoted state of mind will enable us to enjoy Her *līlā* in a calm and happy spirit. In the Rudrayāmalā, the Devī says: "My worship (dhyāna) is without austerity and pain."

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[28] See in this connection Śankarabhāṣya on Brahmasūtras, II. 1.14.

[29] Mahānirvāṇa, VIII. 264-5: See also The Garland of Letters (1922), p. 107.

[30] Taitti. Up. III.6.

[31] B. Gītā, VIII.15.

Thus the emphasis of Śaktism on Citśakti and Māyā Śakti and Prakṛti Śakti is a very important aspect of its synthetic emphasis. Citśakti is beyond both the macrocosm and the microcosm. It is the origin of the series of evolutes which culminates in the experienced universe and the experiencing ego with its five sheaths and three states. It is infinite eternal consciousness and love and bliss. It corresponds to the Saguṇa Brahman of Vedānta while Śiva corresponds to Nirguṇa Brahman. It is the fundamental substratum that, however veiled, is the cause of response in the mineral realm, and of sentience in the vegetable realm, and of thought and feeling in the animal and human realms. It was the special glory of Indian thought, and especially of the Śākta philosophy, to realise and reveal the existence and fundamental cognateness of the response to stimuli and atomic memory which we find in the inorganic plane and the minor sentiency, and psychic response in the vegetable kingdom and the ascending aesthesia or capacity of feeling in the animal kingdom and especially in the human kingdom. Some religions deny the existence of soul to animals and plants, and till the days of Sir J. C. Bose even advanced science denied sentiency in plants and response in minerals.

According to Śākta philosophy, Māyā Śakti is only Śiva in the aspect which He assumes as the material cause (upādāna karma) of the universe. Sir John Woodroffe explains well the two complimentary points of view from which the universe is looked at by Advaita Vedānta and Śākta Vedānta. He says.[32] "Śankara says that there is in truth no creation and therefore there can be no question how it arose. This is because he views the problem from the transcendental (Pāramārthika) standpoint of *siddhi*. The Tantra Śāstra, on the other hand, being a practical sādhana śāstra views the matter from the jīva standpoint. To us the universe and ourselves are real. And Īśvara, the Creator, is real. Therefore there is a creation, and Śiva as Śakti creates by evolving into the universe and then appearing as all jīvas. This is the old Upaniṣadic doctrine of the spider actually evolving the web from itself, the web being its substance in that form." According to the Śākta doctrine, Māyā Śakti is an evolute of Citśakti. During involution, there is a reverse process. Māyā Śakti is involved into Citśakti, and Citśakti is involved into Cit or Brahman.[33]

Taking the grossest forms of the manifestation of Śakti, the doctrine of Śaktism clearly affirms that the tamo-guṇa preponderates in the mineral world while tamas lessens in the vegetable world and is added to by rajas and sattva. In the animal world, rajas and sattva increase while in the human kingdom the ascent is in the direction of more and more sattva guṇa, the highest state being the sublimation and self–transcendence of sattva guṇa in mokṣa. From this it follows that it is the privilege and duty of Man to let the soul's saccidānanda nature shine forth more and more. Hence the ethical life is a life of increasing love and happiness through increasing love and service and renunciation.

In describing the evolution of the macrocosm, we must not fail to remember how the Śākta philosophy amplifies the Sāmkhya theory of categories in a way that reconciles Sāmkhya and Vedānta. The Sāmkhya system does not affirm God and it thinks that the universe is the resultant of the proximity of an infinite number of souls (puruṣas) and of the ever active but insentient Prakṛti which is composed of the three Guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas). It says that Prakṛti moves from its state of involution into the state of evolution because of the proximity of Puruṣa. The evolved categories in the order of derivation are mahat or buddhi (cosmic intelligence), ahamkāra (self-consciousness), manas (mind), the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, the five tanmātras (causal and subtle elements), and the five gross elements of ether, air, light, water and earth after their pāñcīkaraṇa (combination). These twenty-three evolutes form along with Prakṛti twenty-four categories, and the twenty-fifth category is Puruṣa. From ahamkāra in its sāttvic aspect are derived the manas (mind) and the organs of sense, from ahamkāra in its rājasaic aspect are derived the organs of action, while from ahamkāra in its tāmasa aspect are derived the five tanmātras (causal elements). Vijñāna Bhikṣu says that the manas is produced by the sātvika-ahamkāra, the ten organs are produced by the rājasa-ahamkāra and the five tanmātras are produced by the tāmasa-ahamkāra.

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[32] Shakti and Shakta, p. 146.

[33] See in this connection the Garland of Letters, pp. 48-49.

Whatever may be the exact march of evolution, the Sāmkhya system is unable to account how the inactive Puruṣa and the unconscious Prakṛti got into mutual relation to cause the evolution of the universe. The classical illustration given by it is the Andha-pangu-nyāya, *i.e.,* that of a lame man getting upon the shoulders of a blind man and pointing the way which is then trodden by the blind man for the benefit of both. But the illustration has no real force, because it deals with two agencies having volition and consciousness. But Puruṣa has no volition and Prakṛti has no consciousness. Strangely enough the Sāmkhya system attributes to Prakṛti intelligent activity while affirming that Prakṛti is a non-intelligent principle. It is difficult also to understand how Buddhi which is the principle of intelligence can be an evolute of the non-intelligent principle Prakṛti.

The Śākta philosophy has adumbrated a scheme of thirty-six *tattvas* (categories).[34] This scheme has enabled it to bridge the gulf from Puruṣa to Prakṛti and to fuse together the concepts of *caitanya* and *jaḍa* in a most original and remarkable manner. The thirty six *tattvas* are the twenty-four Sānkhya tattvas from Pṛthivī to Prakṛti, and the superior *tattvas,* viz., Puruṣa, Māyā, the five kañcukas[35] (kala, kāla, niyati, vidyā, rāga), Śuddha Vidyā; Nāda or Sadāśiva tattva, Bindu or Īśvara tattva, Śakti and Śiva. These thirty-six *tattvas* are divided into three groups, viz., the five *śuddha tattvas* called *Śiva tattva* (Śiva, Śakti, Nāda, or Sadāśiva, Bindu or Īśvara, and Śuddha vidyā), the seven pure-impure (śuddhāśuddha) tattvas viz., the five kañcukas and Māyā and Puruṣa, and the twenty-four impure (aśuddha) tattvas, viz., from Prakṛti to Pṛthivī. It is worthy of note that this scheme of *tattvas* enables the Śākta philosophy to solve the conundrum which is insoluble in the Advaita philosophy as to how the changeless Brahman becomes the changing universe, and how the One can become the Many. In the Śākta cosmogony the central idea is that Śakti issues out of the Absolute and is not different from Brahman, being only the kinetic aspect of Brahman. Nāda and Bindu are but Śakti with her potency to create in the process of actualisation. Nāda and Bindu are therefore only aspects of Śiva-Śakti. Nāda is not the gross sound heard by the ear. The gross sound heard by the ear belongs to the aśuddha tattva categories and is only the guṇa or attribute of ākāśa (space). Nāda is the first stress of Śakti in the process of creation. Bindu does not mean a dot or a drop. It is the point into which the universe had shrunk at the time of the great dissolution (mahāpralaya), and out of which the universe manifests itself progressively at the time of the primeval creation. The next evolute is śuddha vidyā. Thus the *śuddha tattvas* form a gentle passage from formlessness to form.

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[34] Shakti and Shakta, p. 52.

[35] The Garland of Letters, Ch. XV.

The next step in the transition is effected by the *śuddhāśuddha tattvas*. Out of the kañcukas, kāla is but creative energy. Kāla is the Time-Principle. The other kañcukas are other aspects of creative energy. We now come to the *tattvas,* Māyā and Puruṣa. Māyā creates the cognition of Subject and Object. The kañcukas break up integrated knowledge of the whole into small fractions and hence each soul has only a limited knowledge as the result of such fragmentation and the universe undergoes differentiation and heterogeneity in the shape of the twenty-four impure *tattvas.*

Turning to the microcosm, the philosophy of Śaktism has laid stress on our having a sacramental conception of the human body because the locus of the attainment of God-realisation (upalabdhisthāna) is situated in it. Its exposition of yoga is unique and has got a special glory and attractiveness. It says that the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti (the Supreme Power in the human body) could be roused so as to purify the body and to enable the soul to realise the Oversoul in this very life and in our very body. According to it[36] there are six cakras, viz., mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭāna, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddhi and ājñā. The supreme locus of the Oversoul (Paramātma) is in the Sahasrāra[37] where the soul can behold and have communion and union with the Oversoul. When the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti[38] is roused by appropriate means, it travels along the suṣumnā nāḍi in the vertebral column (Meru daṇḍa) taking the soul along with it to behold and realise the Oversoul.

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36. Ṣaḍcakranirūpaṇam: Tantric Texts, Vol. II.

37. See Saundaryalahari, V. 9.

38. See Intrn. to the Serpent Power by Arthur Avalon (1924).

There is much learned talk about the Cakras as lotuses and about the petals of the lotus and about the Bījākṣaras there and about the deities who reside therein. But this queen of sciences is practically unknown today despite such grandiloquent talk. The so-called lotuses are not like external flowers. They have a physiological aspect and a psychological aspect. Taking the former aspect, they are in the coccygeal, the sacral, the lumbar, the dorsal and the cervical regions of the spinal column. The lotuses in their psychological aspect are regions of light and energy which are psychologically and spiritually realised during life. "The yoga Nāḍis are not the ordinary material nerves but subtler lines of direction along which the vital forces go." In regard to the physiological side it is said: "On each side of the vertebral column there is a chain of ganglia connected with nerve fibre, called the sympathetic cord (iḍā and pingala) extending all the way from the base of the skull to the coccyx. This is in communication with the spinal cord."[39]

It is when we bear clearly in mind this parallelism of the physiological and psychological regional centres that we can realise the value of the Śākta philosophy about the microcosm. The Iḍā and the Pingala Nāḍis are not merely nerve tissues but are also channels of Prāṇa Śakti. Yoga has as its basis the purity of the body. A well-known stanza which occurs in Manu[40] and also in other texts says that we must cleanse the impurities of the body by Prāṇāyāma and purify our sins by Dhāraṇa and disconnect ourselves with the world of sense by Pratyāhāra and remove all anti-divine forces by Dhyāna. Yama and Niyama form the basement for the fabric of yogic ecstacy. Thus the *nāḍis* are purified by Prāṇāyāma. Their impurity hinders the ascent of the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti whereas their purity aids its ascent. The main *nāḍis* are fourteen, and of these Iḍā and Pingala and Suṣumṇā are the most important and among these Suṣumṇā is supreme, because the Prāṇa Śakti goes through it from the Mūlādhāra to the Sahasrāra. We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from the narrow path of clear and correct and comprehensible thought by imaginative and flowery descriptions. For instance, Iḍā and Pingala and Suṣumṇā are compared to the famous rivers Gangā and Yamunā and Sarasvatī, and the Mūlādhāra which is their meeting place is called the Triveṇī. Again, the Iḍā Nāḍi is called the pale moon and the Pingala Nāḍi is called the red sun while the Suṣumṇā Nāḍi is called the fire[41]

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[39] See Woodroffee, The Serpent Power: Introduction.

[40] VI. 72: see also Darśanopaniṣad: Prāṇāyāmalakṣaṇam (Yoga Upanisads, Adyar).

Thus we have inside the Meru-Daṇḍa (spinal column) the six centres from Mūlādhāra to Ājña which are called the seats of Śakti, and above them the Sahasrāra which is the seat of Śiva. The Śākta literature about them is of astounding magnitude and it will not be possible to go into it here. It must however be remembered that the path of Kuṇḍalinī yoga is not only the path of purity but also the path of strength of body and mind and the path of *siddhis* (occult and exalted powers). The Yoga Sūtras[42] of Patañjali describe the *siddhis* (powers) in great detail, and the Tantras describe them in even greater detail. A well-known verse in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad[43] says that to a person of yogic attainments who has made his body a frame of fiery yoga (Prāptayogāgnimayam śarīram), there will be no disease or senility or death. It is said also that he can enjoy infinite eternal bliss by the union of the soul and the Oversoul in the Sahasrāra (the thousand-petalled lotus in the brain).

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[41] See Cāṇḍilya Up. Ch. I, iv.

[42] III Vibhūti pāda.

[43] II.12.

We have thus far dealt with the evolution of the cosmos and the attainment of god-realisation by means of yoga in this life and in our present body.

But the excellence of Śaktism lies not only in its emphasis on yoga but also in its synthesis of various aspects of yoga. Yoga makes *bhakti* a concentrated and flaming passion of devotion and fans jñāna into an incandescent white flame of vision. Without its aid *bhakti* would degenerate into lachrymose feeling and jñāna would degenerate into dialectics. Śaktism harmonises Haṭha yoga, Rāja yoga, Mantra yoga, and Layayoga which left to themselves are made by their professors to attack and destroy one another.

Quite as important to remember is the stress laid by Śaktism on Mantras and especially on the Gāyatrī Mantra and the Hamsa Mantra and the Pañcadaśī and the Ṣoḍaśī. It says that when the Mantra Caitanya is roused, it becomes a potent means of beneficence to the world and spiritual uplift to the individual because of the grace of the Devatā of the Mantra. "Mantra vidyā is the science of thought and of its expression in language as evolved from the Logos or Śabdabrahman. It is in this sense that the universe is said to be composed of letters."[44] The Varṇamālā (garland of letters) is the necklace of Kālī. Of course the supreme symbol and expression is Praṇava (OM). The Lalitopākhyāna gives us as already seen the Sahasrākṣarī (the mantra of one thousand letters).[45]

In the Devī Upaniṣad, Devī says that she is Brahman herself and that the entire cosmos is an emanation from herself and that she is the mother of Aditi who is the mother of all the Devas. The Upaniṣad reveals the Pañcadaśī mantra[46] in a concealed and cryptic and mystic fashion.

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[44] See Woodroffee: The Garland of Letters (*Varṇamālā*) (1922).

[45] See above pp. 33-4.

[46] V. 14.

In the tenth Skandha of Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Śri Kṛṣna asks Devī to incarnate prior to His own incarnation and tells her that humanity would worship Her as the giver of all boons and praise her as Durgā, Bhadrakālī, Vijayā, Vaiṣṇavī, Kumudā, Caṇḍikā, Kṛṣṇā, Mādhavī, Kanyakā, Māyā, Nārāyaṇī, Īśānī, Śāradā and Ambikā. The Bhāgavata says that after she was born as Yaśodā's daughter and brought by Vasudeva, and after she escaped Kamsa's hands, she shone in different places under different names. In the same manner, God Śiva says that the Śakti cult was specially revealed by Him for this (Kali) yuga.

Among the greatest of the Śākta devotees are Hayagrīva, Agastya, Durvāsas, Kālidāsa and Śankarācārya. In later times the names of Mūka·Kavi[47] and Bhāskara Rāya stand out pre-eminent. The splendour of the description of Devī's Paradise in Śrīnagara as described in the Lalitāstavaratnam by Durvāsas is incomparable. Equally wonderful is the description of Devī's beauty and grace in that gem of devotional poetry, viz., the Saundaryalaharī by Śri Śankara. In one śloka Śankara says that it is Bhavānī that indicates the path of true *sāyujya*.[48]

In conclusion, the teachings in the last four chapters of the Lalitopākhyāna embody the tenets and the practices of the Śākta cult and make us realise that Śakti is Saguṇa Brahman.[49] The Devī is the Second Being who rouses up the potential energy of the Supreme Being whom we may designate Nirguṇa Brahman. This is perhaps the reason why Śankara addresses her as Parabrahmamahiṣī—literally the queen consort of the Supreme Being. Though Śakti is commonly known as Pradhāna, Prakṛti and Māyā, she is none of these. For Pradhāna, according to the Sāmkhyas, is an object with jaḍatvam, and consequently devoid of all spirituality. Again in the Viśiṣṭādvaita theory Prakṛti is in the nature of things inactive and inanimate. As for Māyā, it is the root cause of all delusion. Śakti then, as Farquhar puts it, is mūlaprakṛti and the whole world is merely the unfolding of the śakti.[50] We may close this section with a word about the relation which yoga bears to Śakti cultus, whatever may be the origins of yoga.[51] The yoga system as understood relates to six centres, which are mūladhāra,[52] svādhiṣṭhāna, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddhi, and ājñā. The last ājñā is distinctively the seat of Śakti. Without this, the first five could not function. For it is in the nature of Puruṣa that he could not be active by himself and the urge should come from a non-external force which is Śakti. This is what we mean by the inseparability of Śiva-Śakti. It is this admirable conception of the divine which has stirred the mass mind and has facilitated spiritual progress in this ancient country of ours.

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[47] The author of the *Pañcadaśī*. A recent edition with translation is published by B. G. Paul & Co., Madras.

[48] V. 12.

[49] Ch. 40.

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[50] Religious Literature of India, p. 201.

[51] See Garbe: *Sankhya and Yoga,* pp. 34 & 6.

[52] See above p. 91, Kuṇḍalinī Śakti is the Śakti resident in man and latent in mūlādhāra; but when aroused it passes from one centre to the other and finally to the last ājñā (Gopinatha Rao, *Hindu Iconography,* pp. 328-29).

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V.R. RAMACHANDRA DIKSHITAR (1896-1953) belonged to *avant-garde* historians introduced a new methodology into the study of Indian history. He was a brilliant product of the University of Madras. On obtaining his Master's degree he joined the teaching staff of St. Joseph's College (Bangalore) in 1927. In 1946 he became Lecturer in Indian History and Archaeology in the University of Madras. He made a lasting impression on the students and was soon appointed Reader. In 1947 he filled the Professorial Chair of the Department of History and Archaeology. He also acted as Honorary Reader of the Department of Politics and Public Administration for a term of two years from 1945 to 1947.

Professor Dikshitar contributed innumerable research papers to scholarly journals in India and abroad. He was General Editor of Madras University Historical Series. His works covering various dimensions of Indian history include original treatises, translations and volumes edited by him.

WAR IN ANCIENT INDIA
V.R. RAMACHANDRA DIKSHITAR

This book is of unusual importance for those interested in the study of Indian military tradition and the art of warfare in Ancient India. Readers' attention is riveted on Indian historical cycle which begins with the early settlement of Indo-Aryans and ends in the epoch created by Vijayanagar empire. The discussion revolves round critical appreciation of psychological factors leading to internecine wars between states; various theories of war propounded by military thinkers of different schools; chief components of war machines which include organization of armed forces and their several wings; complex system of weaponry and that of espionage; the concept of strategy and tactics; field operation; and elaborate laws formulated to keep wars within bounds. The author substantiates his viewpoint by drawing abundantly on Vedic and post-Vedic literature, Tamil classics, sculptural and inscriptional sources.

THE DIVINE CONSORT
Radha and the Goddesses of India
Edited by J.S. HAWLEY AND DONNA MARIE WULFF

This volume deals with the Hindu conception of God as Woman. For the first time scholars provide a collective portrait of the Goddesses of India. It is based on a conference held at the Centre for World Religion at Harvard University; these articles give a detailed description of one goddess, Radha, the lover and consort of Krishna.

HINDU GODDESSES
Visions of the Divine Feminine in the
Hindu Religious Tradition
DAVID KINSLEY

It is a work of considerable breadth. Kinsley not only describes the main appearances and roles of the goddesses he has selected but also interprets the significance of each goddess within Hinduism and shows how she has come to exemplify important truths within the Hindu tradition. Each goddess is dealt with as an independent deity with a coherent mythology, theology and, in some cases, cult of her own. There are separate chapters devoted to Laksmi, Parvati, Sarasvati, Sita, Radha, Durga, Kali and Mahadevi.

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